

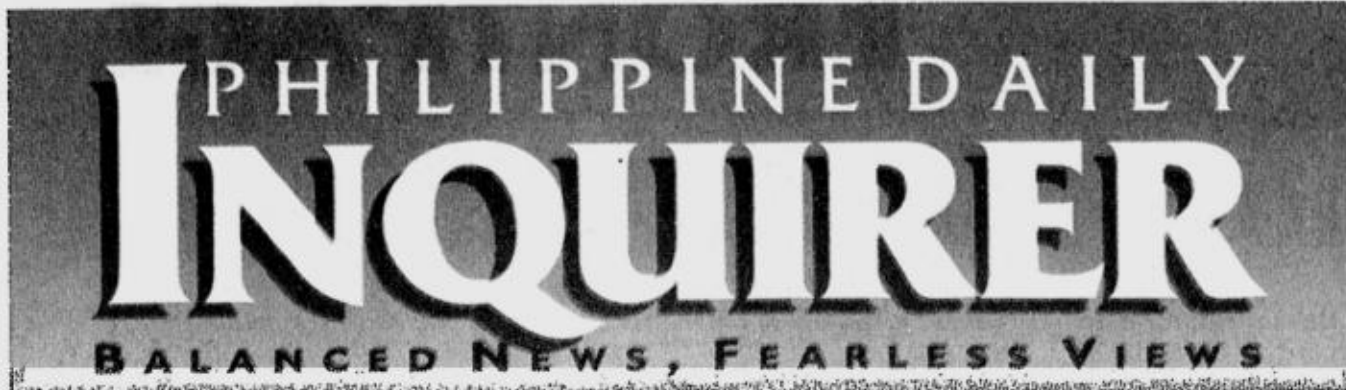
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PARIS—The explosion in the number of divorcees and the widening trend for young people to set up home on their own rather than live with their parents could wreak destruction.

WANT/ A18

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Monday, January 13, 2003 ★ 50 pages / 5 sections / vol. 18 / no. 36 P15

Cayetano in US hospital, waiting for liver donor

By Juliet L. Javellana

SEN. Rene Cayetano would have banged the gavel as new Senate President this morning as part of the term-sharing agreement he had



CAYETANO

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GMA wish: Estrada trial to end by 2004

'I want my successor freed of that burden'

By Amando Doronila

(Last of two parts)

CONCLUDE the Estrada plunder trial before June 30, 2004.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, in an exclusive interview with the INQUIRER on Thursday, said she wanted the termination of the historic plunder trial of deposed President Joseph Estrada before she steps down in 2004.

The President said the conclusion of the trial in the Sandiganbayan would pave the way for national reconciliation with justice.

Asked if she expected the trial to be completed, Ms Macapagal said: "That would be my wish. I would want my successor to be free of that burden ... But the closure is still [the] important thing from the point of view of strengthening our Republic."

She said she had taken steps to speed up the trial with the appointment of private prosecutors to assist the Ombudsman, who is leading the prosecution. The President did not answer the question of whether she would pardon Estrada if he were convicted.

The remarks on the Estrada trial, the first-ever plunder case filed against a Philippine president, were among the highlights of several themes explored in the interview. The highlights include:

- Ms Macapagal does not see a need to seek emergency powers from Congress to press for her reform agenda. "I don't have to be legally cautious because if you don't test, you'll never know what's the limit."

- She will announce her support for a presidential candidate in January 2004, but 2003 will be a year of "no politics" during which she will be focused on achieving reforms she has set out on.

- While her administration shifts its

GMA WISH/ A18

Aides prop up Gloria's image as 'dragon slayer'

By Carlito Pablo

THE GOOD press the President has been receiving since her decision not to run in 2004 may be getting to her advisers' collective head.

An administration insider said over the weekend that major reforms in the offing would transform President Macapagal-Arroyo into a "dragon slayer."

Because she has been liberated from the anxieties of running in 2004, the insider said, the President is gearing up to

take on the country's political and economic elite—something she would have hesitated to do if she were running for office.

"In the next several weeks, the President will be coming up with major reform measures that will slay dragons that have been lorded it over sectors in the economy to the detriment of the people," an administration insider said.

"In short, *walang sasantuhin* (there will be no sacred cows)," said the Malacañang

AIDES/ A20



HONG KONG PROTEST

A Filipina chants slogans during a demonstration by more than 3,000 foreign domestic helpers against the proposed levy and reduction of minimum wages in Hong Kong on Sunday. The 240,000-strong community of foreign domestic workers in Hong Kong is increasingly blamed for snatching badly needed jobs from locals. (See story on Page A6.)

REUTERS

Tourism up in Subic, Baguio City Palace displeased with new US travel advisory

DESPITE concerns about terrorist threats in the country, Baguio City, the Subic Bay Freeport and Southern Mindanao enjoyed higher tourist arrivals last year than in the previous year.

Baguio and the Cordillera saw the number of foreign tourists grow 20 percent in spite of adverse travel advisories issued by several foreign countries, said tourism officials. However, local tourist arrivals dropped by at least 16 percent as of November 2002.

A total of 21,854 foreigners visited the region last year compared with 18,253 in 2001, according to Ed Jularbal of the Department of Tourism in the Cordillera. The visitors came mostly from Japan, the United States, Canada and China.

"We were expecting an increase in the number of domestic tourist arrivals but we were surprised to find out that more foreign tourists came," Jularbal said.

DOT records showed that domestic arrivals totaled 734,312 for 2002, lower than the 757,412

TOURISM/ A20

MALACAÑANG is hurting over a new travel advisory issued by the United States urging Americans to take extra precautions in the Philippines and to avoid trips to several parts of Mindanao due to terrorist threats.

"It's quite reckless," presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye

said of the issuance of the US state department's advisory.

Referring not only to the United States but also to other countries, Bunye said: "We are appealing to other governments that we in fact consider friends to be more circumspect in issuing advisories."

The US advisory, which will remain in place until July 2003, said the "terrorist threat to Americans in the Philippines remains high."

Citing "incidents of kidnappings, bombings, and other violence and criminal activity," it urged US citizens to avoid all

travel to the central, western and southern areas of Mindanao, including Zamboanga City, General Santos City, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi and Sulu.

The advisory suggested that Americans avoid crowded bars, nightclubs and restaurant areas that could be target-

ed by terror groups.

It said the United States was concerned about attacks similar to the Oct. 12 blast on the Indonesian resort island of Bali that killed nearly 200 people, most of them Australian tourists. The blast was blamed

PALACE/ A20



PRAYING FOR SUCCESS

President Macapagal, her husband Mike Arroyo and their daughter Luli attend the Evangelistic Celebration and Prayer for the Success of the 4th World Meeting of Families at the UP Sunken Garden in Quezon City.

VAL HANDUMON

US probes Madame Z report on Marcos loot

By Donna S. Cueto

TAKING seriously the information that Philippine authorities have largely ignored, the US government is investigating reports that KPMG Zurich helped Credit Suisse launder at least \$400 million in Marcos deposits in 1986 to escape a Swiss freeze order.

In an article that appeared in the Asia Times, New York-based journalist Lucy Komisar said that no less than the US Securities and Exchange Commission and the US Department of Justice had started the investigation.

Komisar said a KPMG spokesperson in London, Kate Maybank, had confirmed the investigation.

"At a time when the integrity of global accounting firms is being questioned, the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and justice department are looking into the charges that KPMG Zurich, a division of the international audit company, helped Credit Suisse hide hundreds of millions of dollars looted by the late Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos," Komisar wrote in her report.

The investigation was in response to a request made by Indiana Rep. Dan Burton, chair of the government reform and oversight committee of the US House of Representatives.

Burton took notice of the laun-

US PROBES/ A20

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Luzon and Eastern Visayas will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/01/13/03

Second FRONT PAGE

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Most Pinoys nix Cha-cha, survey shows

MOST Filipinos oppose amending the Constitution to change the system of government, according to results of a Pulse Asia survey released yesterday.

Pulse Asia said 42 percent of November supported constitutional amendments, up six points over

a similar survey conducted in July.

The survey has a 95 percent confidence level and plus or minus three percent error margin, the polling firm said.

"Filipinos who support amending the charter are still in the minority. Despite the heightened in-

terest from some members of Congress to amend the Constitution, most Filipinos would still oppose the move at this time," it said.

A number of legislators support constitutional amendments that would change the government from a presidential to a parliamentary form of government.

There is an emerging consensus in Congress to change to a

parliamentary form of government, but the House has a different timetable from the Senate.

House Speaker Jose de Venecia told AFP last week that "95 percent" of 218 House legislators supported charter amendments to change the government system.

Congress resumes its sessions today and House legislators intent on pushing Cha-cha have declared that the chamber has no backlog of legislation needing approval so it has all the time to tackle the constitutional amendments bill.

"We have cleared our desks," said Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez.

He said the 2003 budget bill that President Macapagal-Arroyo wanted passed immediately had been turned over to the Senate last December.

Gonzalez said the only important legislation still pending in Congress was the absentee voting bill proposing to give the vote to millions of Filipinos overseas. A bicameral confer-

ence committee is consolidating the Senate and House versions of the bill. "So we have the time for the Charter change issue," Gonzalez said in a phone interview.

He was confident that even if there were additional measures in the President's new reform agenda that would need legislators' attention, the House would be able to handle it.

The House is set to hold deliberations on House Resolution No. 16 seeking to convene Congress into a constituent assembly to tackle major changes in the Constitution, including a change in the form of government.

The vice chair of the House committee on constitutional amendments warned yesterday that if Congress doesn't tackle these constitutional changes before 2004, the earliest that the country can carry out these amendments would be 2013. AFP and Christine Avendaño

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GMA reform agenda must favor the poor to work, say militants

By Gerald G. Lacuarta

MILITANT groups yesterday urged the December 30 Movement supporting President Macapagal-Arroyo's reform agenda to pressure the President into making major policy changes in favor of the poor.

"Without GMA showing radical changes for the benefit of the poor, we doubt she can hit a three-point shot in the last two minutes of her government," said

lawyer JV Bautista, a member of the Sanlakas party list group.

The December 30, or 12.30 Movement, was launched the other day by some of the Edsa II forces that catapulted Ms Macapagal to the presidency in support of the President's reform agenda for the remaining 18 months of her term.

Militant groups which formed part of the Edsa II forces but had parted ways with Ms Macapagal have dismissed the movement as the work of the President's "ego-booster and deodorizers."

Sanlakas, the Partido ng Manggagawa (PM) and the Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Manggagawang Pilipino (KAMPI) yesterday presented a measuring stick to supposedly determine the President's sincerity in addressing the people's concerns, which they called the "People's Challenge to GMA."

They contain what they call the "Apat Na Dapit" or 4-Way Test for GMA.

These are: the abolition of the purchased power adjustment (PPA) charges and suspension of the implementation of the zero-tariff regime; re-channeling the budget for debt servicing to social services; and withdrawal of Philippine support for the United States' alleged wars of aggression. With Delfin T. Matlari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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'What about birth control, ma'am?'

By Armand N. Nocum

NOW THAT she has abandoned plans for an election bid, is President Macapagal-Arroyo set to openly wrangle with the Church on the issue of birth control? "That's probably what some sectors want, but I don't think it will happen," Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Change

Of talks that a major policy change in the population program was due and that Ms Macapagal was now willing to aggressively push for the use of contraceptives, Dayrit said "she doesn't believe that's the way to go."

This, he pointed out, even if the President no longer had to woo the Catholic hierarchy for 2004.

Under fire

"She would rather have Filipinos becoming more aware of, and practicing responsible parent-hood," he said. "Cou-

ples should want to bring into the world only as many children as they can provide for."

Ms Macapagal has come under fire for failing to push the "artificial" method of birth control, which is frowned upon by the Catholic Church.

Choices

Critics insist this was the reason the government has been unable to arrest the country's robust population growth. They say "natural" family planning methods, which the Church allows, are ineffective.

Dayrit said the President's position was for both natural methods and contraceptives to be made available to the peo-

ple as choices.

Consequences

"(And so) what we've done in collaboration with local governments is to make contraceptives within reach, at the same time that we push for natural methods," he said. Although natural methods were paid much "lip service" before, he said, it had never really been promoted as vigorously.

Alongside this effort, Dayrit said, the DOH would start a "stronger campaign" this year against abortion. The increase in the number of abortion cases was alarming, he said. "I think we have to take this issue seriously."

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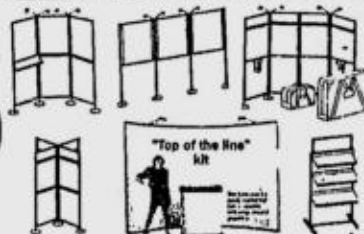


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COTABATO CITY—Army troops have occupied a mountain village after driving away a large group of Moro separatists and members of the Pentagon kidnap gang in three days of fierce fighting, an official

said yesterday. Army spokesman Maj. Julieta Ando told the Associated Press that at least 20 Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels and Pentagon members were killed in military air and ground assaults Thursday and

Friday in Polomolok, South Cotabato.

Ando said the fighting eased Saturday and army soldiers were working to secure the return of more than 1,000 villagers forced to flee their homes.

A military report said soldiers also discovered an abandoned rebel training camp near Polomolok, with an obstacle course, trenches, food and medical supplies.

"We have overrun their positions and we are pursuing them," Army division commander Gen. Generoso Senga told Reuters.

The clashes erupted after 700 armed men of the MILF and Pentagon groups occupied Polomolok, Senga said.

Kabalu denial

MILF spokesman Eld Kabalu acknowledged that rebel positions were overtaken, but denied that a single rebel was killed. He said three guerrillas were wounded. He claimed three soldiers were killed and 14 were wounded, including 11 from pro-government militias.

Kabalu also denied that the training camp had fallen into the military's hands. "MILF

fighters will never abandon it," he said. Polomolok is near a rugged mountainous area where the rebels maintain strongholds.

Senga admitted that the military's figures had been based on intercepted radio messages. "Usually, they bury their dead at once, making an actual physical count impossible," he said.

'Made up'

In the first place, Kabalu said, it wasn't true that members of the Pentagon—composed of former MILF rebels—were in Polomolok. He charged that the military had "made up" the story to justify the attack.

He said the offensive violated a cease-fire accord, and that the guerrillas would lodge a protest next week before a committee of government and rebel representatives.

The government has held several rounds of peace talks with the MILF, the biggest Muslim rebel group. Talks broke down in 2001 following disputes over which side would manage war-destroyed areas.

On Jolo island in Sulu yesterday, one soldier was killed

and eight others wounded in an encounter with Abu Sayyaf bandits.

Military southern command chief Lt. Gen. Narciso Abaya said an elite unit of US-trained counterterrorism troops from the army's Light Reaction Force, 18th Scout Ranger Co. and 26th Special Force Co. clashed with several dozen Abu members near Indanan.

Abaya said the bandit group suffered many casualties, but the exact count could not be confirmed. "Initially we recovered one slain bandit," he said.

Pursuit

Jolo Army chief Col. Alexander Aleo said troops were pursuing the fleeing bandits.

The firefight started around 9:30 a.m. when the troops caught up with the Abu faction led by Isnilon Hapilon and one Aldaber Parad in Barangay Bunoc, Julie S. Alipala, Edwin O. Fernandez, Dennis Jay C. Santos and Ferdinand O. Zuasola, PDI Mindanao Bureau; Martin P. Marfil, AP; Reuters and AFP

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'Biggest' NPA camp found in Nueva Ecija

By Martin P. Marfil

GOVERNMENT troops on Saturday discovered one of the largest communist camps operating in the Nueva Ecija and Aurora areas, the military said yesterday.

Located in Sitio Dupinga, Barangay Tagumpay, Gabaldon, Nueva Ecija, the camp sits on 5,000 square meters and has 26 wooden bunkers. It is at the 2,000-foot elevation of the Sierra Madre range and is concealed from the air.

"We've been looking for this camp since the first week of December," said Col. Juvenal Narcese, commander of the 702nd Infantry Brigade.

The training camp, which could house 500 persons, was

found at around 8:30 a.m. on Saturday when troops stumbled into it. The camp had been abandoned by the New People's Army.

The NPA in the area has been blamed for several offensives last year, including the burning of millions of pesos worth of equipment owned by logging firms operating in Northern Luzon.

Narcese said the military was trying to determine if the camp had belonged to Front 1 or Front 4 of the NPA's Nueva Ecija party command.

He said the camp, the 17th NPA base discovered since April last year, was the largest camp found and taken over by the government in the Nueva Ecija-Aurora area. With Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk

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Joint RP-US police training victim of Bush veto

PLANS for a joint RP-US police training exercise in Manila this year have been put on hold, after the \$30-million additional military aid package the US had promised the Philippines was vetoed by President George W. Bush.

Police officials said a portion of the military aid was to pay for the conduct of the "balikatan-type" exercise between Filipino and American policemen.

Director Avelino Razon, Philippine Nation-

al Police director for human resources and doctrine development said, the exercise was to have been part of the US' anti-terrorist trainings for the Philippines. President Bush vetoed the \$30-million allocation in October

due to "budget deficit problems."

Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes had said the fund was withheld after Mr. Bush decided against approving a \$5.1-billion package approved by the US Congress.

TJ Burgonio

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House asked to probe Erap link to Impsa

EVEN AS preparations are going on for jailed ex-President Joseph Estrada to testify at the Senate hearing on the Impsa power deal on Tuesday, the House has been asked to open its own probe into the involvement of the ousted leader and some of his officials in the approval of the controversial contract.

Administration Reps. Prospero Nograles and Amado Espino Jr. have filed House Resolution No. 931 asking the House to investigate the circumstances surrounding the awarding of the contract for the Caliraya-Bocan-Kalayaan complex to the Argentine firm Industrias Metalurgica Pescarmona Sociedad Anonime (Impsa) during the Estrada administration.

The legislators said they were seeking an inquiry because of Estrada's admission that he had rejected a \$14 million bribe to approve the contract.

In their resolution filed Dec. 19, 2002, the legislators pointed out that the paper trail showed the deal was approved during the Estrada administration and asked the House committee on good government to conduct an impartial probe to "shed light on the approval of the contract".

The investigation would include former officials of the National Power Corp., the energy, justice and finance departments and the Office of the President.

"The public deserves a cool and impartial probe and not a political

witch hunt. There have been serious allegations of impropriety and what we would like to happen is an investigation of the responsible officials so that these allegations can either be proved and the guilty punished, or if found unwarranted, thrown into the wastebasket," Nograles said in a statement.

Estrada had been asked to testify last Dec. 16 before the Senate committee on government corporations and public enterprises on the alleged \$14-million bribe "dangled" before him to approve the Impsa contract.

But his appearance was aborted after the Philippine National Police said it did not receive any official request for his transfer from his Veterans Memorial Medical Center detention suite to the Senate.

Opposition Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. the other day warned Malacañang and the PNP against "making a last-minute attempt" to stop Estrada's scheduled appearance at the Senate on Tuesday.

He said the nation was entitled to the truth behind Estrada's allegations regarding the bribe attempt.

Estrada's lawyers have sought a "black-and-white directive" from the special Sandiganbayan division trying his plunder cases to order the police to escort him on Jan. 14 to preclude a repeat of the "procedural lapses" that botched the Dec. 16 appearance. *Reports from Christine Avendaño, Rocky Nazareno, Volt Contreras and TJ Burgonio*

Why is DA helping meat importers, hog raisers ask

LOCAL livestock growers are wondering why an official of the Department of Agriculture accompanied meat importers abroad to "scout" for suppliers, instead of working to help domestic meat producers.

Nicanor Briones, president of the Agricultural Sector Alliance of the Philippines, said DA Undersecretary Cesar Drilon went to Brazil and Argentina in November last year with some importers to look for meat sources apart from the country's major supplier, Australia.

"While we complain and our livelihoods suffer, our agriculture officials are going abroad with the meat importers and accrediting new suppliers of pork, beef, buffalo meat and poultry," Briones said at a weekly media forum in Quezon City.

"Are they really for the local industry or are they doubling as purchasing managers of these importers?" Briones asked.

The growers have threatened to stage a "food blockade"—a

suspension of their deliveries—in Metro Manila to protest the unabated importation and smuggling of foreign meat products.

Briones said that in 2002, the legal importation of meat products totaled 158 million kilos, or 20 million kilos more than flooded the local market in 2001.

But because smuggled meat continues to pour in, it would be impossible to determine the total volume of imported meat that entered the country, he said.

The local hog industry, for example, was forced to drastically reduce farmgate prices to stay in competition, he said, and as a result incurred losses averaging P1.5 billion a month from June to December.

ASAP's nationwide membership, he said, is seriously considering a week-long cutoff of meat supplies to Metro Manila if the government continues to defer action on their appeals for assistance. *Volt Contreras*



FOREIGN maids in Hong Kong dramatize their opposition to a proposed levy and minimum wage cut during street protests yesterday which drew more than 3,000 marchers. The foreign domestic workers are increasingly blamed for Hong Kong's budgetary woes. *REUTERS*

Maids rally on eve of HK decision on tax

HONG KONG—Thousands of foreign workers staged a rally yesterday to denounce a Hong Kong government plan to impose a new tax on foreign domestic helpers and cuts to their minimum wage salaries.

Some 3,000 domestic helpers from the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and Nepal waved placards inscribed "No to levy, no to wage cut" and chanted slogans during a noisy protest from Victoria Park to government offices in Central.

"Migrants of the world unite," read one of the banners. Some of the domestic workers painted their faces with the slogan "No to levy" in red.

"This is our last rally before the government discusses the minimum wage level so we want to show our anger at the proposed levy and call on them not to cut our wages," said Asian Migrant Coordinating Body spokesperson Connie Bragas Regalado.

The government said yesterday it was still reviewing its policy on foreign domestic helpers and no decision had been made regarding the tax.

It is expected to hold talks on possible cuts to minimum wage levels later this month.

Earlier this month, officials from the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Nepal and Sri Lanka, whose economies rely heavily on money sent home by the foreign maids, met with Hong Kong's labor chief to lobby against the tax, which they said would cause hardship for the maids and their families back home.

Thousands of foreign domestic workers also staged protests in December and on New Year's Day

to protest a proposal by legislator and Liberal Party chair James Tien to impose a HK\$500 (\$64) a month levy on the employers of foreign maids.

Tien also suggested reducing their minimum wages by the same amount to HK\$3,170, a cut of 14 percent.

"The levy is taxing the poor. We are already the lowest paid in Hong Kong. We won't compromise our stance which is totally against the levy and wage cuts," said Regalado.

Foreign domestic helpers had to take a five percent minimum wage cut in 1999 following the Asian financial crisis and have not received any salary increase since 1997.

Regalado added she would represent the foreign workers at a United Nations human rights meeting in

Geneva, Switzerland in March, to voice opposition to the Hong Kong government's proposal to tax them.

Philippine Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas has warned that her government could stop domestic helpers working in the city if authorities here imposed a monthly tax after talks with Hong Kong's secretary for economic development and labor, Stephen Ip last month.

Sto. Tomas said after meeting Ip that the Philippines may not approve future contracts that fell below the current minimum wage of HK\$3,670 (\$471).

Filipinos make up the biggest number of live-in maids in Hong Kong, with an estimated 153,000 of them working here, followed by 70,000 Indonesians and smaller numbers of Thais and Nepalese. *AFP and AP*

Suddenly, in US, Jimenez has 'very, very little money'

By Philip Tubeza

HAS EXTRADITED Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez suffered a sudden "reversal of fortune?"

National Bureau of Investigation-Interpol Division chief Ricardo Diaz said United States authorities were "puzzled" by Jimenez's declaration to the Florida court hearing his case that he had much less money than he had declared in the Statement of Assets and Liabilities he had filed with the Philippines' Commission on Audit on April 30, 2002.

"The US Federal Bureau of Investigation is puzzled because in his financial declaration, Jimenez declared having only a very, very minimal amount of money," Diaz said.

Diaz's FBI contacts did not say what the "minimal amount" was but it was certainly much less than what Jimenez had declared last year, the NBI official said.

In the SAL that he filed with the COA, Jimenez said he was worth P355,852,367.62, or \$6.7 million.

He declared his total assets as worth P435,852,367.62 but placed his liabilities at P80 million.

In the same SAL, Jimenez said he had P1.02 million in the bank, a P9-million house in the exclusive Ayala Alabang enclave, a P32-million-house in posh Forbes Park, cars worth

P20 million, and stocks and securities worth P372,032,002.

But the congressman did not list the names of the companies in which he owned stocks. He also left blank the space under "business interests" in his SAL.

To clarify things, Jimenez will be required to file a "financial reiteration form" before the court during the next hearing set for Jan. 13 (tonight in Manila), Diaz said.

The Florida court also wanted to find out if the money Jimenez would be using for his bail came "from legitimate sources," Diaz added.

He said the hearing was scheduled to determine if Jimenez had complied with the bail conditions set by the court.

"The court will decide whether to accept the cash for his bail," Diaz said.

The conditions include a bail surety of \$300,000 and \$200,000 in cash; a requirement that Jimenez's relatives act as bail guarantors, and "proof" that the bail had come from legitimate sources, Diaz said.

He added that the US authorities would also ask the controversial legislator to submit a more detailed financial statement.

After fighting to avoid extradition to the US which he had fled in the late 1990s, Jimenez gave himself up and was extradited to the US on Dec. 26 last year.

LaoagAir raps continued suspension

LAOAG International Airlines will appeal its continued suspension by the Department of Transportation and Communications despite findings that pilot, or "human," error had caused the fatal crash of one of its aircraft in November last year.

Alvin Yater, LIA assistant vice president and spokesperson, said the airline management viewed the DOTC decision to prolong the suspension "with grave concern and regret."

Yater made the statement following Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza's announcement last week that "fuel starvation" had caused the crash that killed at least 20 persons. Mendoza said the pilots failed to notice that the fuel switches were in the "shut" position before taken off.

The best pilots all over the world make mistakes, Yater pointed out, and the airline should not be penalized for the accident.

For the record, he said LIA management had exercised "extra due diligence" in hiring the pilots of the ill-fated Flight 585.

Also, Yater insisted, LIA planes were properly maintained, especially since the company serviced mostly "missionary routes," or the unprofitable ones that major airlines rejected.

This helped promote rural economies, Yater pointed out. In effect, he said, the DOTC suspension was really "punishing" people in those remote areas, and operators of small airlines. *Norman Bordadora*

Labor attachés want diplomatic status

Blanche S. Rivera

"UNFAIR."

The Department of Labor and Employment lamented the "disadvantaged" position of labor officials abroad, compared to their counterparts in Philippine embassies.

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas said labor attachés were not even holders of diplomatic passports and did not enjoy diplomatic immunity.

Despite years of lobbying by the DOLE, she said, the Department of Foreign Affairs has refused to grant labor officials the same rank and protection.

Sto. Tomas has been meeting with Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas Ople to work out the immediate is-

suance of diplomatic passports to 45 labor attachés all over the world.

"What the DFA guys are entitled to, our people (in the Philippine Overseas Labor Office) should also be entitled to," Sto. Tomas had said in an earlier interview.

"The bulk of the work (worldwide) concerns OFWs," she explained, "and so (labor attachés) would need the privileges (that come with) a diplomatic passport."

Sto. Tomas was referring mainly to immunity from arrest and courtesies accorded state representatives.

DFA personnel carry diplomatic passports, while labor attachés are issued red passports, identifying them as government officials of a country.

Sto. Tomas said labor attachés

were, in fact, the ones who needed diplomatic immunity because they were tasked with rescuing overseas Filipino workers during conflicts and, in extreme cases, "even to the extent of violating the laws of the host country."

She cited the case of a labor attaché in an undisclosed post who had come close to being arrested—and his house almost raided—because he was helping runaway OFWs.

Another labor official would have been summoned for questioning by authorities in one host country, Sto. Tomas recounted, had he not been "answered for" by the Philippine ambassador.

"What happens is that (labor attachés) have to rely on the good

graces of the ambassadors," she said. "What if they did not have good relations?"

She said diplomatic immunity for labor attachés was an urgent need at this time because of the impending war in the Middle East. Labor officials abroad would need "personality" to shepherd the OFWs around for relocation or repatriation, she explained.

Sto. Tomas said she was confident that Ople would grant her request, if only because he served as Labor Secretary for many years.

A team composed of DOLE and DFA officials flew to Kuwait last Monday to assess the condition of OFWs in the area and to prepare for movement in the event of a US attack on Iraq.



MEASURING UP

President Macapagal-Arroyo's sincerity in addressing people's concerns is to be gauged by this giant measuring stick presented by Sanlakas party-list Rep. Rene Magtubo (left) and lawyer JV Bautista (right) at a press conference yesterday in response to the newly formed December 30 Movement supporting Ms. Macapagal's reform agenda. *JOAN BONDOC*

Palace won't make Berroya shut up; Ping belies handcuffs rap

By Carlito Pablo

MALACANANG yesterday advised Chief Supt. Reynaldo Berroya to coordinate with police authorities investigating the Jan. 7 killing of Senior Supt. Teofilo Viña if he had information regarding the case.

Presidential Spokesperson Ignacio Bunye, however, stopped short of telling Berroya to shut up in his raging word war with his old nemesis, opposition Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson.

"Not really," Bunye said over radio RMN when asked if the Palace was telling Berroya to clam up.

Berroya, who has been clashing with his erstwhile friend Lacson since the latter was in the police service, had said that Viña indicated to him sometime last year that Lacson, former head of the defunct Presidential

Anti-Organized Crime Task Force, had knowledge of the kidnapping and murder of publicist Salvador "Bubby" Dacer and his driver, Emmanuel Corbito.

Berroya had also said that Viña, who was implicated in the double murder, had done other "dirty jobs" for Lacson.

Viña was head of PAOCTF-Visayas at the time Dacer and Corbito were abducted in Makati City in November 2000. Policemen implicated in the case had pointed to him as the one calling the shots in the commission of the crime.

For his part, Lacson has accused Berroya of recycling "old lies" and using dead people to make his charges against him.

"If he (Berroya) has specific information, then he should give it to authorities," Bunye said in the radio interview. "Side comments can be confusing so we're appealing for investigators to be allowed to do their job."

In another case, Lacson yesterday brushed aside the charge that he had defaulted in a \$3-million handcuff deal with businesswoman Blanquita Pelaez.

A California court has ordered him to pay the amount to Pelaez after he had failed to approve payment of the handcuffs the national police had bought from the businesswoman.

"I will still have to check with the US courts before I give my reaction," Lacson said in a statement.

But Lacson did defend his decision to default on the payment of the handcuffs, saying "I protected the interest of the Filipino taxpayers in not honor-

ing a contract grossly disadvantageous to the government." With Rocky Nazareno

Resolution to jail chief's row urged

THE FIGHT over the leadership of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) is far from over.

In a 19-page motion for reconsideration, Senior Supt. Josue Engaño asked the Court of Appeals to rule whether Chief Supt. Arturo Alit could question his appointment as BJMP director by President Macapagal-Arroyo on Sept. 16, 2001.

Engaño said he had been tapped by the President to replace Alit who was sitting as BJMP head as its officer-in-charge.

Citing the case of an earlier presidential appointee to the same position, Engaño noted that the Court of Appeals had ruled that only the Chief Executive could designate the head of the BJMP.

The appellate court's First Division had junked the petition filed against retired Chief Supt. Aquilino Jacob, who had been appointed BJMP chief by former President Joseph Estrada, according to him.

As in the Jacob decision, Engaño urged the Court of Appeals' Fourth Division to scrap the quo warranto petition against him and order Alit to question his appointment before the Office of the President instead.

Interior Secretary Jose Lina is concurrent head of the BJMP pending the court's resolution of the Engaño-Alit tiff.

Christian V. Esguerra

GMA fires 5 DPWH execs in repair scam

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday ordered the dismissal of five officials of the Department of Public Works and Highways for involvement in the P139-million vehicle repair scam.

A Malacañang statement said the President affirmed the report of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission that had found the officials "guilty of dishonesty, grave misconduct, gross neglect of duty and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service."

Ordered dismissed were Burt Favorito, director, administrative manpower and management service; Emily Tanquintic, director, comptrollership and financial management service; Abraham Divina Jr. and Florendo Arias, director and assistant director, respectively, of the Bureau of Equipment and Oscar Abundo, director, legal services.

The officials were all presidential appointees. They were found to be involved in the ghost or overpriced repairs of DPWH vehicles to the tune of P139 million. Carlito Pablo

Pope's rep to open lay center

POPE John Paul II's representative to the 4th World Meeting of Families in Manila will inaugurate the Institute for World Evangelization (IWE) center when he comes late in January.

Alfonso Cardinal Trujillo will inaugurate the IWE building at 5 General Lim St., San Antonio Village, Pasig City on Jan. 24 at 11 a.m. The center houses the office and residence of the institute.

Cardinal Trujillo is president of the Pontifical Council for the Philippines. The 4th World Meeting of Families will be held on Jan. 22-26.

On the eve of the IWE center inauguration and as part of the institute's formal opening, Clare Massa from Malta and pianist Simone Attar will give a musical presentation at the Rigodon Ballroom of the Manila Peninsula Hotel. On the same night, world renowned architect Prof. Richard England, who designed the center's chapel, will make a presentation on Sacred Spaces.

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January 18, 2003	Saturday 1:00PM - 5:00PM
EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER RELATIONS AND HANDLING COMPLAINTS	
January 18, 2003	Saturday 1:00PM - 5:00PM
HOW TO HANDLE PROBLEM EMPLOYEES	
January 18, 2003	Saturday 1:00PM - 5:00PM
PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT	
January 18, 2003	Saturday 8:30AM - 12:30PM
BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	
January 25 - February 8, 2003	Saturday 1:00PM - 5:00PM
COST ESTIMATION FOR BUILDING CONSTRUCTION	
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'No such thing'

WE need a "rigodon" in the Senate the way we need the "Cha-cha" before 2004: like a hole in the head. At a time when the general despair over the limitations of our democracy has touched bottom—to gauge by the public's welcome reaction to the President's Dec. 30 assault on "endless politicking"—the recent maneuverings in the Senate threaten to leave us stuck, once again, in the political muck.

EDITORIAL "There's no such thing, there's no such thing," Sen. Edgardo Angara said in a chance interview on Friday, referring to the reports about an alleged coup attempt in the Senate. The rumors were "not true," Angara said, and were only "in the media."

If only things were as simple. But opposition leaders did tell reporters that a new majority of 15 senators was being put together, implying that the new arrangement was a done deal that enjoyed the tacit support of President Macapagal-Arroyo. The news did catch the members of the majority, who outnumber the opposition 13 to 10 in the Senate, by surprise. Majority senators did confront the President about the reports. And the President did admit that she had explored the possibility of joining forces in a unity government with Angara, who heads Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, the main opposition party.

It is difficult to make immediate sense of an issue if the moral compass is worn by the likes of Sen. John Osmeña, who famously received a P1-million *balato* from a generous mahjong winner by the name of Joseph Estrada, and who started the damaging Senate impasse in the middle of last year when he defected to the opposition out of pique. But Osmeña correctly reflected the public mood when he expressed discomfort over the maneuverings. He said if the matter came to a vote, he would choose Drilon, the administration incumbent, over Angara, his opposition colleague. "[Even if I am in the minority,] I am an independent and I am not with the LDP," Osmeña said.

How did we come, only two weeks after the President redefined the political landscape by effectively withdrawing from it, to such a pass? There is plenty of blame to go around.

GMA first. The President is first to share in the blame. We expect her, of course, to rally as many supporters and to woo as many allies as she can around her 18-month reform agenda. Because many of the proposed reforms are legislative measures, it is logical for her to consolidate her bases of support in Congress. But at what price? Since she came to power, both houses of Congress have remained solidly aligned with the administration. During one visit to the INQUIRER, the President professed satisfaction with the way her legislative agenda was being carried out in the legislature. Besides, she added, on the really important laws the opposition has proven its willingness to work with the administration. Given all these, then: Does it make sense to enter into "some kind of a coalition" with Angara's LDP—to the extent (to quote an angry administration ally, Sen. Joker Arroyo) of "rearranging the Senate?"

The opposition next. Angara and opposition leaders are also to blame. By pledging "collaboration (with) and support" to the President very soon after her Rizal Day announcement, Angara apparently expects the public to simply forget the adversarial, even hostile stance he and the opposition previously struck against the administration. Yesterday, he issued a press statement calling on "all political parties" to "rally behind" the President's call "based on a common growth and reform agenda." A ringing endorsement, but one which begs the question: Is he talking about the same administration which he melodramatically barricaded himself against in the Senate last Labor Day? He said then he was about to be arrested on trumped-up charges. Because he has not explained his change of heart, his support for Ms Macapagal can only attract all kinds of speculation about political motive.

Arroyo third. But Arroyo, the ex-Aquino Cabinet official invariably described as a maverick administration senator, is also to blame. Instead of using the so-called Wednesday Group of administration senators he represents to drive change from within the majority coalition, he is content to fire broadsides through the media. If he acts this way, is it any wonder that the President and her advisers may think the dour, pragmatic Angara may prove a more reliable ally than a Joker who's wild?



A strong republic needs a strong leader

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz



KAPALMUKS talaga ang mga congressmen, the leaders of whom belong to the administration party. They're still pushing Charter change in spite of President Macapagal-Arroyo's statement that we should not talk about it and concentrate on passing urgently needed legislation, in spite of widespread clamor that this be put on the back-burner.

But it is obvious that the congressmen have selfish motives in trying to force a Charter change at this time. The first thing they will do once Congress convenes into a constituent assembly is to abolish term limits, extend their terms by suspending the 2004 elections, erase the constitutional provisions against political dynasties, and change the system of government into parliamentary. All of these to benefit themselves, not the nation.

And it is also obvious that somebody is giving the congressmen their marching orders. It is not President Macapagal-Arroyo, it is somebody who wants to be head of government but who knows he does not have a ghost of a chance of being elected president. So he wants a parliamentary system where the head of government, the prime minister (PM) is elected not by the people but by the members of parliament (MPs), the counterpart of today's congressmen. Instead of buying the votes of millions of voters, the PM-wannabe, buys only the votes of perhaps a hundred or so of his colleagues.

And what a government such an administration will be. The head of government begins his tenure by bribing members of the legislature, supposedly the representatives of the people.

His administration begins already mired in mud, distinguished by its lack of morals, and getting what it wants through corruption.

Since the government in a parliamentary system is run by the party that controls parliament, and since the PM stays in power only for as long as he has the votes of a majority of the MPs, he is at the mercy of his colleagues. He has to cater to their whims, give them what they want—pork barrel, contracts, deals, franchises and all sorts of shady transactions—or

else they will vote for another PM-wannabe who can give them a better deal.

And parliament can do what it wants, since it is a unicameral legislature, unlike today when we have the Senate to balance the House of Representatives. Furthermore, the Cabinet members come from the ranks of the MPs. So you have the bureaucracy, the people, the whole nation caught in the grip of the party in power. There would be no checks and balances.

Our presidential system may have imperfections, but a parliamentary system, for us, would be worse. We already experimented with that system during the Marcos regime, when the legislature consisted only of the Batasang Pambansa, and look what we got.

The present system doesn't work perfectly but it is not the fault of the system itself. It is the fault of the people we elect to public office, beginning with the congressmen themselves. Even if we have another system—parliamentary, monarchy, dictatorship, what have you—if we put the same people to run the government, that government would still be rotten.

The President is not being a leader when she chooses to be neutral in the Cha-cha controversy. In the words of Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., she cannot be a "fence-sitter" on such an important issue. She has to lead, that's why she is President. This is the time to be a strong leader. How can you have a "strong republic" when its leader is weak?

How can you lead a nation when you can't even lead your own partymates? For it is the

members of her own party, Lakas who are at the forefront of the Cha-cha movement. Instead of being namby-pamby, the President can put her foot down and tell them to stop this Cha-cha foolishness. Not being a candidate in the 2004 elections, she has no political baggage. She need not be afraid of politicians. Not having any political ambitions anymore, she is the best President who can tame the abuses of the opportunistic congressmen. The people will be behind her. Her place in history will be assured if she can put in place meaningful reforms.

The Cha-cha "movement in the House cannot be stopped," Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez said Friday after the President's statement not to talk about Charter change. House Resolution 16, which seeks to convene Congress into a constituent assembly to change the Constitution, is the only remaining item in the House agenda, Gonzalez said.

"We have cleared our desks of all important legislation except those that are pending in the bicameral conference committees," he said. That is not true. There are still many very important bills pending in the House which need urgent attention.

And it is not true that the House overwhelmingly favors a Cha-cha. Rep. Imee Marcos told the Kapihan sa Sulo last Saturday that the younger legislators are all opposed to it. "It is only the *gurangs*, the old congressmen who want it because their third terms are expiring," she said. And she enumerated the numerous important bills that the House has not acted upon.

We, the people, should support the more responsible members of Congress like Marcos. Let's help ourselves. Otherwise we would forever be at the mercy of opportunistic politicians. Congressmen are supposed to represent us and work for our welfare. But they don't; they work only for themselves.

In case the Constitution is changed in spite of the widespread opposition, vote against its ratification. And don't vote for the congressmen—like Gonzalez—now pushing for a Charter change.

What about Acsa Ramirez?

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros



more effective had she made her decision two years ago when it would have been purer and more clearly a gratuitous act of self-sacrifice.

But I do not join the chorus of voices asking us to forget everything else. I do not join the chorus of voices that bids us turn one from sinner one day to saint the next. I believe in conversion too, or in people being struck by enlightenment on their way to whatever. But before people who experience such thunderbolts turn virtuous, they first become penitent. They first confess their sins, express remorse and vow to undo the harm that they have done.

That is the reason I am a little disturbed by the INQUIRER's choice of Person of the Year. Particularly after the explanation that the original choice of Person of the Year was Acsa Ramirez, who was shunted aside when GMA declared her intention not to run again at the end of the year.

I know that the INQUIRER's basis for choosing the Person of the Year is not the one who most contributed positively to the country but the one who most had an impact on the country, good or bad. But it is never always easy to not attach a positive connotation to the choice because it confers a certain stature to the chosen. It is an honor unto itself.

Proof of it is the list of candidates itself. The others include Bayani Fernando, the Abadilla 5, Eugenia Apostol, Manuel Pangilinan, Teofisto Guingona, Panfilo Lacson, Sulficio Tagud, Manny Pacquiao, Raul Roco, Dinky Soliman, and Jaime Augusto Zobel. There is someone who is not there but begs to be included in it, someone who has had a tremendous impact on the nation, even if it is not always easy to call it positive. Indeed, even if it is not always easy to call the person himself respectable.

That person is Mark Jimenez. He is the 2002 version of 2000's Chavir Singson. He it was who brought this government down. Positive or not, I myself would have been hard put to vote for him as Person of the Year. At the very least on grounds of aesthetics.

I've said repeatedly that I myself am prepared to help government in light of GMA's decision. But I've never said that I am willing to forget the past or what the GMA government has stood for over the last couple of years. Certainly, I am not willing to forget Acsa Ramirez, the ordinary citizen who did a wondrously extraordinary deed. That was to very courageously risk life and limb to denounce her bosses who were stealing the people's money. But who, instead of being rewarded with praise and recognition, ended up being pilloried and humiliated by the President of the Philippines before the nation.

GMA has said that armed with her decision not to run again, she is calling on everyone to help her reform the country. Well, before she can look at other people and demand that they stop the harm they have been doing or perish, she must look at herself and undo the harm that she has done, or fall into the pit of oblivion. Otherwise, she will just sound like Marcos proffering himself as the solution to the chaos and aimlessness that were his own doing. Acsa Ramirez stands as mute and eloquent witness to GMA's sins of the past. She is owed a most contrite and humble apology. GMA does not give it and she will be no nearer to pushing the country forward than when she began.

We ourselves do not demand that she does so and we will be no nearer to climbing out of the pit than when we began. Life does not go on when we take inquiry blithely and consign it to the void. Or when we deliberately choose to ignore it in light of something good that happens along the way.

Life does not go on that way. Only death does.

Comments to dequiros@vasia.com

Sign of the times

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan



CITIZENS' groups have formed the 12:30 Movement to rally behind President Macapagal-Arroyo's call for reforms in our country and government, and this is heartening. But perhaps GMA ought to listen first to former Senate President Jovito Salonga who admonished her to just work with the Cabinet that she already has, as "this is no time to play the game of musical chairs." I agree with Salonga's well-meaning advice. The current Cabinet revamp has kicked up more controversy, thus squandering some of the goodwill GMA sowed in her Dec. 30 speech and sapping national energy that's better directed toward achieving her eight-point program. Another reason is that it takes so long for a Cabinet member to learn the ropes, which becomes near-impossible in the remaining 18 months.

A telling sign of our times was when Jose Luis R. Llamas, 26, died last Friday at the hands of a motorcycle passenger whom he accidentally bumped in Taft Avenue, on his way to the De La Salle campus. The two got into an altercation and the motorcyclist pulled a gun and killed Llamas, walking away afterwards.

Llamas graduated from the Ateneo law school in the top bracket and had just taken the bar exams where he was said to be a candidate for topnotcher. He was the second of three sons of former PAL flight attendant Marilou Ruiz-Llamas and according to photojournalist Mandy Navasero, once a flight attendant herself, Marilou's husband and two other sons, who live and work abroad, came home for Christmas for a family reunion here. The family hoped to be reunited for good abroad as Marilou and Jose planned to leave after the release of the bar exam results this March. But that assailant, who remains at large, dashed that hope.

This violent episode so soon after the New Year illustrates why Nandy Pacheco's Gun Ban is so badly needed.

Speaker Jose de Venecia hosted a dinner for Gennady Seleznev, chair of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, last Friday evening at his Dasmariñas Village residence. As usual JDV's after-dinner extemporane-

ous remarks were so soaring that Seleznev quipped that he'd like to invite JDV to be his campaign manager in the elections this spring where he would be running. The Russian Speaker said with a big grin that he's sure to win with JDV campaigning for him. Indeed JDV has few equals in the realm of extemporaneous after-dinner remarks.

JDV noted that while the temperature in Russia is now 25 degrees below zero, in Manila it's 25 degrees above zero. The warmth of Manila's weather, he quipped, is manifested as well in the warmth of the House's reception for the Russian delegation. JDV pointed out that while Russia is very much a part of Europe and the West, a part of it, places like Vladivostok and Sakhalin, is also Asian. Thus, he said, looking at the Russian eagle with its outspread wings, you realize that one points to the West and the other to the Far East. This reality, he said, greatly encourages the Philippines to propose "an Asean Plus 3 (Japan, China and Korea) Plus 1 (Russia)" to integrate the Russian Federation into Asean; hopefully, this new relationship would open up Russia's vast resources, such as its timber, oil and natural gas, to Southeast Asia, including possible investments by RP timber entrepreneurs in wood-processing industries in the Russian Far East.

These have not been auspicious times for Heherson Alvarez as he was eased out of the Cabinet last Nov. 30 and his wife Cecile is currently courageously battling the Big C in New York City. But Sonny should draw consolation from a letter recently issued to the media by Compostela Valley Rep. Manuel "Way Kurat" Zamora, wherein he described Alvarez's role in what he terms "the taming of the social monster

that's Mt. Diwalwal." "Way Kurat," a Cebuano term that translates into "Walang Gulat" in Filipino, was a nickname the neophyte congressman, 51, perhaps one of the most colorful figures in the House, earned from his constituents. A college dropout and former activist, Way Kurat was a three-term provincial board member of Davao del Norte and eventually Compostela Valley, and an avowed environmentalist who personally tends an 800-sq. m. nursery of fruit-bearing trees in a corner of the House complex, a joint project of the Department of Science and Technology and the House. Last Christmas he gave each of his House colleagues a potted kalamansi tree.

In his letter, Way Kurat described how Alvarez was the first DENR secretary in a succession of eight secretaries to work out a rational and courageous solution to the long-festering tension and bloody conflict in the Diwalwal gold rush. Alvarez's formula, which was supported by Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, called for placing the entire Diwalwal under government control and carving out an 8,000-hectare mineral reservation from the Picop claim, to be redistributed equitably among the claimants. Way Kurat stressed that for the first time this solution gave due course to the small- and medium-scale miners who have long been displaced and marginalized by the big powerful players. He termed it a "social revolution in Diwalwal" whose end goal is "to democratize wealth, create a middle class, mitigate the harm done to the environment and restore the area to a more livable and benign state."

Way Kurat wrote that he earlier doubted Alvarez's "political will to solve the complexity that is Diwalwal"; in fact he opposed Alvarez's confirmation at the Commission on Appointments and resigned from Lakas where Alvarez was secretary general. But that doubt, he said, was dispelled and he had a complete turnaround when on July 2, 2002, Alvarez accompanied him and the small miners through a dangerous five-hour back-breaking midnight trip to Cotabato for a final meeting with President Macapagal-Arroyo, and then back to Davao.

Eagles' flight

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Carlos Isagani T. Zarate



AND then there were 12. Last Jan. 6, at 8:20 a.m., the seventh offspring of Ka Brianne and Jag saw the first light of day. The young will now join Pangarap, Bayani, Maginoo, Kapayapaan, Mia and another yet-to-be baptized sibling "born" November last year. Ka Brianne and Jag, still in their prime, are expected to produce more offspring, if good conditions warrant. Population control is out of the question. Their tribe must increase and survive. I have to warn the Population Commission though that this is not a cause for worry. Nor is there a need to debate with the Church on this issue.

The offspring produced last Jan. 6 was the 12th eaglet bred in captivity at the Philippine Eagle Foundation (PEF) breeding center located in the watershed area of Malagos, Calinan, Davao City. The hatching of the yet-to-be-named eaglet comes almost 11 years after Pag-asa, the first Philippine eagle conceived in captivity through artificial insemination, was hatched on Jan. 15, 1992.

While Pag-asa is a product of artificial insemination, the newly hatched eagle, weighing 121 grams, was conceived by the natural mating of Ka Brianne and Jag—a milestone in the captive breeding of this endangered specie, once described by famous aviator Charles Lindbergh as the "air's noblest flier."

"This progress has now allowed the Philippine Eagle Foundation to take eagle conservation to its next level—that of introducing the species back to its original range," says Dennis I. Salvador, PEF's executive director. The PEF-run breeding center now has 28 eagles under its care. Two other eggs produced by natural pair Tsai and Princess Maasim are in the process of incubation.

Notwithstanding, these milestones are still clouded. For a start, PEF is saddled with funding problems. It is estimated that for each eagle under its care, the breeding center needs at least P100,000 for maintenance, food and veterinary care for one year. Since 1988, government funding for the program was already cut off and the

center mainly relies on foreign grants and donations from private individuals and firms, including the multinational companies. In fact, PEF is now offering the newly hatched eagle for adoption to interested "godparents" through its Adopt-an-Eagle Program. PEF's other major concern is to expand the area of its present full-capacity breeding center. With its financial woes, I wish the day would never come when billboards carrying product brands will be attached to eagles' cages, just like in that scene from the film "A Fish Called Wanda."

But over and above the financial constraints, the bigger threats to the extinction of the country's national bird are still human follies: unabated deforestation and the continued destruction of the country's remaining forest, the eagles' natural habitat; poaching by hunters; the limited, if not outright lack of education and understanding about the needs for environmental conservation and sustainable development. Add to these the notoriety of some government agencies in the non-implementation of existing conservation laws and regulations.

I cannot imagine how the eagle, despite a successful breeding program, will survive if the country's remaining forest cover, estimated at only 17 percent, is fast vanishing. A 1988 satellite scanning map revealed that Mindanao, the country's so-called last frontier, has only 28 percent total forest cover out of the island's 2,859,780-hectare land area. The statistics are obviously well below what our country needs: at least 60

percent forest cover for a balanced and sustainable ecology, according to the experts.

The continued depletion of Mindanao's remaining forest has long been blamed for the now too-familiar yearly flooding in several of the mainland's key provinces and cities during the rainy season. As a result, yearly too, countless human lives and hundreds of millions in property are lost due to environmental related tragedies—facts that decades ago were already familiar for those living in Luzon and some parts of Visayas but unknown still to Mindanaoans.

In many ways, the extinction or survival of the Philippine eagle may also mean the survival or doom for our country. With the country now caught up in a political frenzy, does anybody care?

ENDANGERED SPECIES TOO: Also equally threatened in the forest of political opinion are those who advocate social and meaningful reforms and changes. In the early morning of Dec. 30, lawyer Abundio Marapao, a convenor of Plunder Watch-Davao, was shot several times by motorcycle-riding men right in front of his residence in Bajada, Davao City. Luckily, *compañero* Abe, as we fondly call him, survived and is now recuperating following a 17-hour operation. Prior to his assassination, he also exposed irregularities involving officials of the DPWH and the now deactivated Southern Philippines Development Authority (SPDA).

Abe's failed assassination still came as a shock, notwithstanding the still unsolved Davao Death Squad vigilante killings, since the city has no prior incidence of a lawyer being gunned down, unlike the nearby cities of Tagum and General Santos. For a city known for its tough peace and order campaign, it will surely be watched if Abe's case may just become a cold statistic of unsolved crimes.

Comments to karlos_z23@hotmail.com or kar_laws@yahoo.com

Not peace or war, but what we stand for

COMMENTARY

Dean Jorge Bocobo

NOW is the season of the *alis-bayan*, when tearful, (or thankful) departures are the common experience of many families, as December's arrival of balikbayans become January's departures and goodbyes. "Back to the salt mines" some of those leaving say with gallows humor, as they join the exit lines at our ever-chaotic airport. There, they are already morphing back to form, back to their lives and jobs in the societies that our modern diaspora has deposited them, from San Francisco to Zanzibar.

With global terrorism apparently in "sniper mode," all travelers are aware of a heightened risk for an airline shoot down, or other catastrophic atrocity, which al-Qaida recently tried against Israel. They only just barely missed a Tel Aviv bound jet recently using shoulder-fired weapons similar to the deadly Stinger missiles of mujaheddin fame.

Eight million Filipinos, one in 10, now live or work overseas, hence the quaint appellation, overseas Filipino workers (OFWs). Last year, OFWs contributed between US\$8 billion and \$10 billion in hard currency, about P500 billion to the Philippines. Here, unfortunately, a corrupt and inefficient government gobbles it all up on "governance." Including a deficit of around P200 billion, and a national budget of about P800 billion, the Philippine government is spending about P1 trillion a year, more than twice the total repatriated by OFWs.

Those departing for the Middle East have special reasons to be concerned, of course. Two Filipinos last year died at the hands of suicide bombers and the threat of war makes their chosen destination a hazard to life and limb. But even worse, if war does break out, they might be repatriated to the Philippines, where they would surely be jobless and their families hopeless.

For their sakes, I remain optimistic that a war on Iraq can still be averted. I disagree with those who seem to think that peace can be enforced merely by insisting upon it. I believe that peace-

ful, diplomatic means can make rogue states like Iraq and North Korea stand down from dangerous and threatening postures, when these approaches are backed up by credible means of enforcing the collective will of the international community, including bloody war, economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation. Without a credible threat of coercive force, peace is an empty slogan that ill-serves the greater causes of freedom, justice and democracy. Come to think of it, what worth is there in a peace without these other things?

Ultimately, it is these greater causes, to which the overwhelming majority of humanity undoubtedly subscribes, that render illegitimate, the reign of rulers like Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Kim Jong-il in North Korea. Just look around the world. Dictatorships and totalitarian regimes have crashed and fallen.

The idea of democracy has conquered the world. Even those who hate America or resent her for historical reasons cannot speak against the idea of which she may be the greatest exemplar and most successful experiment: liberal, constitutional democracy with a representative government freely elected, guaranteeing human rights and liberties, and enforcing universal opportunities for prosperity and productivity.

It is time for such leaders as the murderous Saddam and the flipped-out Kim Jong-il, to give it up and go on to the oblivion of failed experiments and evolutionary dead ends. Granted, they are creations of the superpowers that once contended for world domination. Their particular histories are artifacts of the Cold War, for they are personalities that were molded by that previous con-

test. But the Cold War has been settled in favor of democratic government as the best means of organizing the political realm of human societies. Democracy is the human experiment that worked the best in the 20th century. First Russia, now China and all of the previous communist world has slowly but inexorably moved in that direction. The trend toward democracy is irreversible in the world. These leaders should abdicate by virtue of sheer obsolescence.

Although the Philippines, as some commentators have pointed out, is only a small player on the stage of world affairs, certainly in a political and military role, we have a vast stake in these events and scenarios because of the fact that the Filipino diaspora is probably a permanent condition. That is to say, it is highly likely that some large percentage of Filipinos will continue to tap the lucrative vein of productive employment available to them in the global marketplace for talent and industry, as long as the opportunities in their homeland remain as limited as they are now.

In fact, some people have suggested that educating at least a portion of our work force specifically "for export" to other countries could be a viable strategy for national development, or survival, given our insistence on high population growth rates. That fecundity will guarantee a perpetual shortage of jobs in the domestic market, so we shall likely always have doctors, engineers, nurses, teachers, seamen, domestics seeking and getting jobs abroad. Eight million Filipinos are already so deployed.

It is my contention that it is the protection of our vital national interest in their safety and continued productivity, as well as the principles that we stand for, as a free and democratic nation, that should inform our foreign policy and our entire attitude to the issues of peace or war, which only answer the question, how, and not why.

Comments to deanjbocobo@yahoo.com

Handling requests for medical help

IF given the opportunity and if one is in a position to do so, most Filipinos respond favorably to pleas for assistance, especially if they may spell the difference between life and death.

The INQUIRER is fortunate that every time it reports cases of indigent people in need of medical treatment, there are always readers who come to the rescue. Often, these Good Samaritans request that their identity be kept under wraps. The plea for anonymity is understandable. They could become the target of solicitation for all kinds of assistance the moment their names and addresses see print.

Last Jan. 5, the first Sunday of the year, the INQUIRER

READERS' ADVOCATE

Raul J. Palabrica



published the expression of gratitude by the 21 or so poor and ailing Filipinos who, in 2002, came to the newspaper to seek assistance for medical treatment. They thanked the anonymous readers who contributed some P600,000 to pay for their medical bills. Though some of them have not fully recovered from their illnesses, the outpouring of support has boosted their spirit and hopes, for the future.

The son of a tricycle driver from Santiago City, Isabela, who is suffering from kidney failure, received in addition to P346,000, a wealthy donor's pledge to shoulder all expenses for a kidney transplant the moment a suitable kidney donor is found.

The Siamese twins of a bean-and-coffee farmer, who earns P50 on a lucky day, are scheduled to undergo surgery this July, courtesy of the medical staff of the provincial hospital and Philippine Children's Medical Center in Quezon City who learned about their problem from the INQUIRER.

Criteria

The heartwarming news report caught the attention of a reader from Pasay City who, last year, furnished me a copy of the letter she wrote to various government officials requesting financial assistance for a high school student in Northern Samar who is suffering from leukemia.

I did not hear from that reader again until after the Jan. 5 story came out. Last week, she called me to ask why her letter was not handled the same way as the cases of the indigent people mentioned in the story. She wanted to know the criteria the INQUIRER uses in handling such requests for assistance.

The editor in chief explained that the newspaper gets numerous appeals for medical help from different parts of the country. Due to space limitations, she gives priority to serious or life-and-death cases. Those chosen are further reviewed to make sure they are genuine and not "bleeding heart" scams being perpetrated by unscrupulous persons.

The medical cases are treated like news reports: they are checked for their accuracy. The letter sender or doctor mentioned in the letter is interviewed to get more details about the problem. The verification process is speeded up if the patient himself visits the INQUIRER offices and personally explains his problem to a staff member.

If the patient comes from a place where the INQUIRER has a correspondent, the latter is instructed to visit the patient and verify his or her medical condition. Once the editorial staff is convinced about the authenticity of the story, a reporter is assigned to write it. Its publication will depend on the availability of space or the urgency of the problem.

Hands-off policy

As a matter of policy, the INQUIRER does not solicit funds from the public to assist in the medical treatment of the patients whose cases it reports. All offers of assistance, whether monetary, in kind or services, have to be sent directly to the patients or the physicians attending to them.

The INQUIRER does not want to have anything to do with the handling or disposition of whatever assistance is given to the patients. The rationale behind the hands-off policy is simple: the newspaper does not have the personnel who can answer the queries of the people who want to give assistance, receive and issue receipts for monetary contributions and later turn them over to their intended beneficiaries.

Besides, if well-meaning persons entrust their money to the INQUIRER for delivery to third parties, it becomes morally obliged to make an accounting of the disposition of those contributions, with an independent accountant to boot attesting to its accuracy.

And in the unlikely event that the newspaper commits an error in the preparation of that accounting report, no matter how small or inadvertent it may be, expect the critics of the INQUIRER, especially the politicians who hate it for exposing their crimes against society, to seize upon that mistake to question the "integrity" and "credibility" of its news reports. The hands-off policy is the best way to avoid getting into that sticky situation.

This approach should not, according to the editor in chief, be interpreted to mean that the newspaper is averse to the idea of participating in fund-raising activities for noble or charitable causes. Its involvement in such activities is usually in the nature of an up-front monetary contribution, free advertisement space or full publicity for the objectives of the project.

As a result of its Jan. 5 report, the INQUIRER will most likely become a victim of the success of its "medical mission" for indigent sick Filipinos. Many of our countrymen in need of medical treatment may be encouraged to tap the facilities and reach of the newspaper to solicit help for their problems.

As long as the requests meet the criteria of the newspaper, they can rest assured they will be given the attention and consideration they rightfully deserve.

The readers' advocate may be reached at the following address: "The Readers' Advocate" c/o Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, Makati City. Or through fax nos. 897-4793 to 94, or reader-sadvocate@inquirer.com.ph.

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We need reminders of martial law

LETTERS

Retirement program for the Coast Guard

THIS is in relation to your paper's editorial last Tuesday, Jan. 7, 2003, titled "Reminders of martial law."

We agree that, in this day and age, it is highly important to always provide people especially the younger generation, with reminders of what took place during the Marcos regime, the martial law years, in particular. The younger generation tend to be apathetic or indifferent since they did not actually experience the horrors of martial law. Hearing about what happened and experiencing them first-hand are two very different things. Hence, events like the showing of "Dekada '70" during the Metro Manila Film Festival and the discussions and reactions that came about after people have watched it, somehow reinforce the stories that they hear and would continue to give them an idea of the nightmare that the people experienced during that time. We hope, as a result, they too would help oppose martial law or any of its manifestations from ever happening again.

The Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) also agrees and believes that to attain justice in its true sense, the Philippine government has to take action for the enforcement of the US Court decision to award \$2 billion in damages to nearly 10,000 human rights victims of the Marcos regime. The files of the 6,000 victims of human rights violations used in pursuing the class suit against Marcos in Hawaii form part of the collection of the Museum of Courage and Resistance



(the Martial Law Museum) established by the TFDP in 1999.

The TFDP recognizes the importance of remembering, not only by maintaining the museum but also by encouraging and cooperating with others. A very recent example of this is the building of martial law memorial sites in different parts of the country (e.g. Davao, Negros Occidental, Cebu,

Zamboanga del Sur, Lanao del Norte, etc.) in partnership with the relatives of the victims, the local government, the religious and other non-government organizations in the area.

The terrors of the past, especially during martial law, are reasons why we should always be vigilant. The new year is an opportunity for us to move on, and moving on does not

mean forgetting what we have gone through as individuals and as a nation. Moving on is learning from past experiences and ensuring that the things that happened in the past will never happen again.

—DR. AURORA A. PARONG,
executive director,
Task Force Detainees of the
Philippines, 19 Malingap St.,
Teacher's Village, Quezon City

THE ENLISTED personnel, who comprise the backbone of the uniformed service, are the lowest paid individuals. It is a fact that when these personnel retire, many are penniless, homeless and jobless. This could be attributed to lack of plans for the direction their lives will take after they bow out of the service. Perhaps, this could be preempted if the command could give proper guidance to these personnel to ensure the stability of their respective families on their way out of the service.

When I was the vice president of the Philippine Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association Inc. (PCG CPOAI), I was pushing for the creation of a body whose mandate is to organize and manage a program that would benefit both the retiring PCG enlisted personnel and the PCG itself. That by the time an enlisted man retires, at his option, he could still be productive by devoting his remaining years to an endeavor he would have planned through this program.

A retiring enlisted man should signify his intention at least 18 months prior to the effectivity of his retirement. In the last six months, he would be enrolled, at the discretion of the command, in the program to undergo a workshop or seminar relative to management, entrepreneurship, mer-

chandising, farming and other business ventures or endeavors that would further enhance the hard-earned resources while in the active service and thereby improve the lifestyle of the retirees. So that by the time this program is fully implemented, retirees will be looked up to in their respective communities as role models of simple, peace-loving, disciplined but well-established family men that their former organization can be proud of.

Unfortunately, this concept has never materialized because at that time the PCG was on its final phase of its reorganization following the full implementation of the separation from the PN, AFP and the subsequent transfer from the Department of National Defense to the Department of Transportation and Communications. Now that the PCG has finally found its true course, I hope the present leadership of the association, headed by MCPO Perito S. dela Cruz and SCPO Danilo L. Cariño, president and vice president respectively, this idea will be made possible.

—ENS. JOEFRY V. BRUCELO PCG (ret.), administrative assistant to the building administrator, Toll Operations Complex, Citra Metro Manila Tollways Corp., Doña Soledad Ave., Barangay Marcelo Green, Bicutan, Parañaque City

Campos family has not filed for SSS benefits

THIS is in reference to an item in a news article, titled "Campos' mother sells fruits, cigarettes to make ends meet" last Dec. 8, 2002. It also said: "The last time mother and son talked was at noon on Tuesday. They discussed John's father's pension benefit from the Social Security System, which had yet to be released a year after his death."

The statement is grossly unfair to the SSS. The writer did not bother to verify if the Campos family filed claims for benefit with the SSS.

According to the records of our SSS Cebu office, there is no application for funeral or death benefits filed for and in behalf of the

beneficiaries of Romeo T. Campos.

Violeta Nacar, sister of Campos, has confirmed to us that the application for SSS benefits is still with Pomposa Campos, the surviving spouse of Romeo T. Campos. We advise Ms Campos to file the application at the SSS the soonest possible time.

We want to believe it was a mere lapse in discretion on the part of the writer for the undeserved attack on the SSS.

—JOEL P. PALACIOS,
assistant vice president,
Media Affairs Department,
Social Security System,
East Avenue, Diliman,
Quezon City

Care needed in reporting Church wrongs

ON JAN. 6 the INQUIRER published the St. Louis Post Dispatch (a US newspaper) national survey that 40 percent of Catholic nuns across the United States must have suffered some form of sexual abuse from priests or another nun. Thirty-four thousand of them!

On Jan. 7 the INQUIRER came out with this news: "RP nuns less prone to abuse by priests—CBCP"

Just glancing through that, one gets the mistaken idea that it is a statement coming from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. In the interest of

journalistic truth and "balanced news, fearless views," one finds this is not true and that the statement is only the personal opinion of a particular nun, Sr. Rosario Lorenzo, CM, who works at the CBCP as executive secretary of the Mixed Commission on Mutual Relations Between Bishops and Religious. How many times the media would state "CBCP" when actually it's not the official statement of the organization. Enough of this, because such is deceptive. Sister Rosario might have just blurred out her own personal view—but

media blew it up as the CBCP's. Wrong again!

Regarding the St. Louis Dispatch finding, I suppose before it was conducted in 1996, nobody could say for sure that such an incidence existed in the magnitude reported. So Sister Rosario, in fairness to truth, cannot categorically come out with such a general statement since scientific data is just not available.

After the media blast on the sex scandals in the institutional church last year, this one is another salvo for this year. We are

pained by such phenomena and how we wish they never really happened at all.

But we have to look to Christ who is both divine and human. So is the Church. As human, the Church shares in the pains and weaknesses of the human; but due to its share in the divine, she will overcome. She will prevail. But we have to be truthful and truly repentant and reform. "Ecclesia semper reformanda."

—MSGR. NICO R. BAUTISTA,
8436 Kalayaan Ave.,
Makati City

Band-aid solution to floods but still a relief

METRO Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando's high-profile blitz to rid Metro Manila's sidewalk of vendors is a sure-fire hit. He deserves our gratitude. With the rainy season just about over, I believe he should now pour his energy in solving or at least minimizing the damage that floods inflict on many people living near the Tullahan River, affecting the residents of Malabon and Valenzuela. The time to start is now before the rains come. This would test Fernando's mettle if he could show the same zeal and dogged determination he has shown admirably in his no nonsense drive to clear the sidewalks.

I have lived near the Tullahan River for the last 26 years. Twenty years ago it took two continuous days and nights of rain before the river overflowed its banks. Now, two hours of continuous rain is enough to trigger a full-blown flood. The river, more of a curse than a blessing, rushes with impunity into the living rooms of houses, damaging the furniture, appliances and killing livestock. During the early years, the riverbanks were still free of squatters. Now they are making the river their garbage dump. When the river rises, carrying the garbage along with it, all this garbage is blocked by

the low-lying Tullahan Bridge on MacArthur Highway, near the SMB plant. Choked with garbage, it prevents the river from flowing freely under the bridge. The water is pushed backward, causing the river to rise rapidly. Car owners in subdivisions near the river hurriedly take their cars to higher ground as soon as the heavy rains fall. Squatter families take to the roof of their barong-barongs to escape this nightmare.

With Fernando now at the helm of the Department of Public Works and Highways, he is in the best position to marshal the resources of two agencies to give the residents near the river some relief. Why not dredge the river to make it deeper? So much mud, silt, sludge and industrial waste have accumulated all these years. A deeper river, I believe, will enable the garbage and all the detritus of modern living to flow swiftly under the Tullahan Bridge. We hope this will take the river a longer time to rise. I know this is a band-aid solution, but think of the countless people who will be benefited.

Why don't you give it your best shot, Mr. Fernando?

—FELICISIMO M. ESCUADRO,
8 Magsaysay St., Potrero,
Malabon City

Warning to barbarians on wheels

I AM a relative of one of the employees who works in a seaside resort in Daet.

My relative called my attention regarding the MadDog Motorcycle Club's barbaric and objectionable activities during the group's stay at the resort last Dec. 6, 2002.

On that day, the MadDog Motorcycle Club, composed mostly of foreigners and some Filipinos, went to the resort as part of their annual ride. After dinner, the officers paraded four young girls and started to bid girls out to the members who could bid the highest. The auction or bidding was met with howling, whistles, shouting and laughter, considering that most of them were already drunk. After bidding, the members who gave the highest bid brought the girls to their respective rooms for the night. It was painful for my cousin to see how these young girls of Daet were being humiliated and auc-

tioned off like simple products or slaves.

I was able to contact two of the girls a few days later and they said they were not treated well by the foreigners who won them because they could not perform the acts requested by the foreigners. These girls have reported this to the NPA and have reached Ka Roger who has promised to retaliate against the MadDog Motorcycle Club members.

I am writing this to warn the members of the MadDog Motorcycle Club not to drive in the Southern Tagalog area to avoid any untoward incident between them and the NPA.

I believe the officers of the MadDog Motorcycle Club owe the women, the people of Daet and even their own wives an apology for their inhuman acts.

—EVELYN BONDOL,
Talisay, Daet,
Camarines Norte

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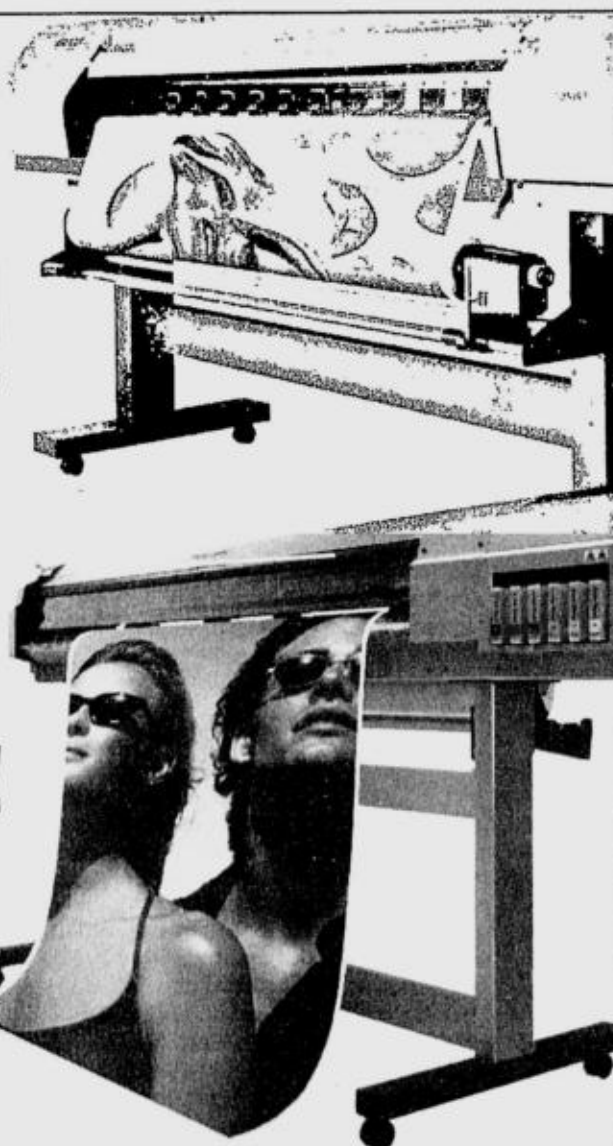
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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Illinois gov commutes 167 death sentences

CHICAGO—Calling the death penalty process "arbitrary and capricious, and therefore immoral," Gov. George Ryan cleared Illinois' death row Saturday, commuting 167 condemned inmates' sentences in the broadest attack on the death penalty in decades.

Ryan's decision, which came three years after he temporarily halted state executions to examine the system's fairness, was quickly denounced by prosecutors, the incoming governor and relatives of some murder victims. "Every one of the victims, he has killed them all over again," said Cathy Drobney. Her daughter

Bridget was killed in 1985 by Robert Turner, whose sentence was commuted.

It was a sharp contrast from the jubilant reaction at Northwestern University, where journalism students investigating Illinois death row cases have helped exonerate some inmates. "Governor Ryan has taught us

what leading truly looks like," said Lawrence C. Marshall, director of the Center on Wrongful Convictions at Northwestern University. "This is greatness, my friends."

The mass commutation was the sharpest blow to capital punishment since the US Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional in 1972, forcing states to redraw their laws to make them more equitable.

The commutation came two days before the Republican leaves office as one of the nation's most influential anti-death penalty advocates—a legacy he has em-

braced even as an ongoing federal corruption investigation targeting his tenure as secretary of state ruined his chances for reelection and made him a pariah within his own party.

Ryan said he sympathized with the families of those who had been murdered, but he felt he had to act.

"I am not prepared to take the risk that we may execute an innocent person," he wrote in an overnight letter to the victims' families warning them of his plans.

That reasoning didn't add up for prosecutors.

"The great, great majority of these people that have petitioned for commutation... did not even contest their guilt," said Peoria County State's Attorney Kevin Lyons. "He's disingenuous when he says that certainty is the issue."

With death row inmates he had recently pardoned sitting in the audience as he spoke Saturday, Ryan framed the death penalty issue as "one of the great civil rights struggles of our time."

"Our capital system is haunted by the demon of error—error in determining guilt, and error in

determining who among the guilty deserves to die," Ryan said. "What effect was race having? What effect was poverty having?"

Ryan halted all executions in the state nearly three years ago, after courts found that 13 Illinois death row inmates had been wrongly convicted since capital punishment resumed in 1977—a period when 12 other inmates were executed.

He said studies conducted since that moratorium was issued had only raised more questions about the how the death penalty was imposed. AP

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US envoy arrives in Seoul to defuse crisis

SEOUL/WASHINGTON—With the world gripped by fear of a nuclear-armed North Korea, a US envoy arrived in Seoul on Sunday to try to defuse the crisis amid warnings from Russia that too much pressure on the communist state could backfire.

North Korea again denied it had ever admitted to having a covert nuclear weapons program and warned the United States its people would disappear in "a sea of fire."

In the latest diplomatic response to North Korea's decision to pull out of a global treaty preventing the spread of nuclear arms, Kelly was making first visit to the region since October when he said Pyongyang admitted to a nuclear arms program.

Kelly is due to meet officials at the presidential Blue House on Monday and to hold talks with president-elect Roh Moo-hyun.

"We are going to talk positively," he said on his arrival.

Diplomatic activity was under way elsewhere in the region.

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, fresh from talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, met in eastern Russia with Konstantin Pulikovskiy, a Russian point man on North Korea who is believed to have close ties to its reclusive leader, Kim Jong-il.

"It is important that North Korea be steadfastly worked upon to gain a peaceful solution," Koizumi

told Pulikovskiy, Putin's prefect for the far east.

North Korea, suspected by the United States of making nuclear bombs and of possibly having two in its arsenal, on Saturday became the first country to pull out of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), triggering alarm in neighboring countries and worldwide condemnation.

Within hours, it said it was free to resume missile-firing tests, ratcheting up tension with the United States in a bid to force Washington into negotiations.

Analysts say Pyongyang and its secretive leader have been anxious for the survival of their administration ever since US Presi-

dent George W. Bush last year bracketed North Korea with Iraq and Iran in an "axis of evil." South Korean officials, their capital within striking range of 11,000 North Korean artillery barrels, said Pyongyang was trying to hasten a resolution of the nuclear standoff.

Japan's Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary, Shinzo Abe, told Fuji Television from Khabarovsk that Pyongyang was "playing a dangerous game," but the issue could be resolved through talks.

"If the world applies pressure and convinces North Korea that it will not gain anything with this game... I think it is possible for the situation to return to the way it was," he said.

However, Russia's Pulikovskiy said his knowledge of Kim Jong-il suggested a soft approach was likely to be more effective. "He will not permit being pressured from outside," Pulikovskiy was quoted as saying. "He will only be repelled by this."

Signaling its anger in a renewed outpouring of rage against the United States, Pyongyang urged all Koreans to unite to rid the peninsula of the US presence, part of a drive to build on differences between South Korea and the United States sparked by mounting anti-American sentiment.

"The US intentionally fabricated our admission to a nuclear development program," South Ko-

rea's Yonhap news agency quoted the North's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) as saying.

The United States said in October that North Korea had admitted during Kelly's last visit to having a covert program to enrich uranium for nuclear arms in violation of a 1994 agreement.

Pyongyang has said repeatedly its remarks to Kelly were distorted.

The same month, North Korea said it would address US concerns about its nuclear program if the United States signed a non-aggression treaty, guaranteed Pyongyang's sovereignty and pledged not to interfere in its economic development. **Reuters**

Doctors picket home of Aussie prime minister

SYDNEY—Australian doctors protested outside the Sydney home of Prime Minister John Howard Sunday over his government's preparations to join a US-led war against Iraq.

A delegation representing the 700-member Australian Medical Association for the Prevention of War handed over a one-page "prescription for peace" urging Howard not to send Australian troops into conflict with Iraq.

Howard did not meet with the delegation but a spokesperson for the doctors, Gillian Deakin, said: "We know eventually the message will get across, we hope it is before the body bags start coming in."

The doctors called on government to work with the United Nations to negotiate a disarmament settlement with Iraq as Australia is doing with North Korea over its recent moves to revive a controversial nuclear program.

"As doctors we are the ones who have to go and try and pick up the pieces when people do get blown up," said another delegate, Robert Marr.

He said the prime minister should be protecting Australians, and not just be a "yes man" to US foreign policy.

Howard announced on Friday that Australia would likely send military forces to the Gulf in coming weeks in preparation for a possible war in Iraq over Baghdad's alleged program to develop weapons of mass destruction.

Howard insisted his government had taken no final decision about whether or not to participate in a US-led war and hoped UN efforts to disarm Iraq peacefully would succeed.

But opposition parties were up in arms over Howard's approval of a forward troop deployment and demanded a vote in parliament before any Australian forces were committed to war. **AFP**



OFF TO WAR

STAFF Sgt. Paul Roraff kisses his wife goodbye while their two children fight back tears in Fort Hood, Texas. Roraff is one of the 150,000 American soldiers being deployed in the Gulf region for a possible war with Iraq.

Actor Sheen leads thousands in anti-war rally

LOS ANGELES—US movie star Martin Sheen on Saturday led thousands of people in a rowdy protest march in Los Angeles against President George W. Bush's plans for a possible war with Iraq.

Sheen, who plays a fictional US president on the hit television show "The West Wing," called for Americans to fight for a peaceful approach to the Washington's crisis centering on Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

"A lot of people have been silenced for a long time but that is ending," he said. "We are telling the world that we are patriotic Americans but we do not support going to war with Iraq."

"From this time forth, may all

our thoughts and deeds be a non-violent response to violence," he told the cheering crowd in a presidential tone.

Police sources said that up to 6,000 demonstrators took part in a protest march and rally held in front of government buildings in the West Coast city's downtown area, chanting "no blood for oil" and "stop Bush now." Sheen, a veteran anti-nuclear campaigner who was the main speaker at the rally, has been one of the most vociferous opponents in Hollywood to Washington's policy toward Iraq.

Sheen pushed the wheelchair of celebrated Vietnam War veteran Ron Kovic, who suffered severe war wounds and whose sto-

ry was featured in the movie "Born on the Fourth of July."

"The government is leading us into a situation that can only hurt us as a nation," Kovic said, addressing the crowd.

The protest organized by the group Answer (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) was noisy but peaceful with performances by musicians including Jackson Browne and Slash from the heavy rock group Guns N' Roses. No arrests were reported.

The demonstration had been billed as the largest anti-war protest in Los Angeles since the Vietnam War with 30,000 people expected, but turnout was far lower than organizers hoped.

Answer, which is closely tied

to far left US political activists who support Cuban leader Fidel Castro and North Korea, is planning more protests next weekend in San Francisco and Washington DC.

The leftist leanings of Saturday's rally were evident from stalls offering dog-eared books by communist father Vladimir Lenin as well as Arabic translations of former Chinese leader Mao Zedong's "Little Red Book" of quotations.

The demonstration came as the Bush administration stepped up its military buildup in the Middle East in response to what US officials have said are Iraq's efforts to manufacture weapons of mass destruction. **AFP**

Sunshine brings relief after cold claims 900 lives

DHAKA, Bangladesh—Sunshine bathed parts of Bangladesh and India on Sunday after a bitter three-week cold spell claimed at least 910 lives in South Asia, where millions of people live without heat, electricity and warm clothing.

However, early morning thick fog hampered road, rail, river and air transport and stranded thousands of people for hours in India and Bangladesh, transport officials said.

Fifty-four deaths, mostly of children and elderly villagers, were reported from chilly winds on Saturday and overnight in northern and central Bangladesh, where the worst of the winter appeared to be ending, the mass circulation Janakantha daily said.

The unofficial death toll in Bangladesh hit 540 as Ishwardi, a town in northern Pabna district, recorded this winter's lowest temperature of 5.1 C Saturday night, Janakantha said. The Relief and Disaster Management Ministry in Bangladesh has not given a death toll.

Another 322 people have died in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, a state government official said on condition of anonymity.

"The city of Kanpur recorded the state's coldest temperature in 30 years—zero C (32 F) on Friday. There was some relief as the temperature rose to 3 C on Saturday."

Schools have been closed until Jan. 16 because of the cold wave

sweeping the state of 200 million people.

The state government said it was organizing the distribution of blankets and plastic sheets to poor people.

Another 30 people perished in India's eastern Bihar state, officials said. With sunshine bringing relief, many people visited the zoo and parks in the state capital of Patna on Sunday.

In the Himalayan nation of Nepal, at least 18 people have died from cold weather, a home ministry official said in Katmandu, the capital.

All those killed were children or old people living in the southern part of the country bordering

India, the official said on condition of anonymity.

In Bangladesh, the gloom appeared to be lifting with people basking in the sun in the capital city of Dhaka and Rajshahi district after five days and temperatures rising by 3 C (5 F) before noon on Sunday.

However, the meteorological office in Dhaka warned of another cold spell later this month.

The sun also shined in the Indian capital, but the Meteorological Department said cold conditions will continue for several more days, with winds blowing from the northern hills.

New Delhi recorded a minimum temperature of 3.7 C (38.6 F) on Saturday, 3 C (5 F) below normal. **AP**

WORLD BRIEFS

Stoned to death

AMMAN—A dog that had been trained by a young man to carry love letters to his sweetheart was stoned to death by the girl's brother in an apparent bid to protect her honor in conservative Jordan, a report said Sunday. The official Petra news agency said the dog, named Big Joe, was killed last Wednesday as it carried a love letter from the unnamed suitor to his girlfriend asking her to marry him. Big Joe had been trained by a family in the northeastern town of Zarqa to carry in a pouch on its back a grocery list to the nearby fruit and vegetable store. The trips inspired their son—who had been turned down by the girl's family three years ago because he was still a student and had no position—to train it to carry love letters to his sweetheart. **AFP**

India shoots for the moon

NEW DELHI—India plans to send its first unmanned mission to moon in the next four years at a cost of nearly 3.5 billion rupees (\$73 million), a senior space research official said in an interview published Sunday. A spacecraft weighing nearly 300 kg will orbit the moon 100 km above the lunar surface for about two years, the Hindustan Times quoted Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan, head of the Indian Space Research Organization, as saying. "The long-term plan evolving out of this first mission is for the next 25 years. They are all unmanned," Kasturirangan said. "These (missions) will sow the seeds for a manned requirement," he said. India has not yet set a date for launching the mission. **AP**

2 militants nabbed in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysian police have arrested two suspected members of a cell of Jemaah Islamiyah, the Islamic extremist network suspected of a string of plots and attacks in Southeast Asia, a government official said Sunday. The two men, both Malaysian religious teachers in their 30s, were detained early Saturday in Sandakan, a town in Malaysia's Sabah state on Borneo island, the official said on condition of anonymity. **AP**

Australian to rebuild death machine

BRISBANE, Australia—An Australian euthanasia campaigner whose suicide machine was seized by customs officials as he was about to board a flight to the United States to unveil it said Sunday he would rebuild the device. Dr. Philip Nitschke, a physician who founded the pro-euthanasia group Exit, was about to board a flight to San Diego on Friday when customs officers at Sydney airport opened his bags and took the machine. They also confiscated plastic bags with drawstrings that people could put over their heads to euthanize themselves. Nitschke was to unveil the machine—which cost him almost \$11,400 to develop—at a meeting of the National Hemlock Society in San Diego on Sunday. **AP**



MAURICE GIBB

MIAMI BEACH, Florida—Maurice Gibb, a member of the famed disco band the Bee Gees, died Sunday at a Miami Beach hospital. He was 53.

Gibb, who joined with his older brother and his twin to harmonize their way to becoming one of the best selling musical groups ever, suffered cardiac arrest before undergoing emergency surgery for a blocked intestine. He was admitted to Mount Sinai Medical Center Wednesday and underwent surgery Thursday.

"To our extended family, friends and fans, with great sadness and sorrow we regretfully announce the passing of Maurice Gibb this morning," Gibb's family said in a statement. "His love, enthusiasm and energy for life remain an inspiration to all of us. We will all deeply miss him."

Gibb played bass and keyboard for the group, whose name is short for the Brothers Gibb.

The Bee Gees—twins Maurice and Robin, and their older brother Barry—have lived in South Florida since the late 1970s. Their younger brother, Andy, who had a successful solo career, died in 1988 at age 30 from a heart ailment.

Known for their close harmonies and original sound, the Bee Gees are members of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and their 1977 contributions to the "Saturday Night Fever" album made it the best selling movie soundtrack ever with more than 40 million copies sold.

Among their disco hits on that album are "Stayin' Alive," "More Than a Woman" and "How Deep Is Your Love," and "Night Fever." **AP**

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CAGAYAN DE ORO	Don Gregorio Palaez Sports Complex	March 9, 2003
TACLOBAN	Leyte Sports Complex (Grandstand)	March 16, 2003
KALIBO, AKLAN	Aklan State Univ. Kalibo Campus (RMCAT)	March 30, 2003
PAMPANGA	Bren Z. Gulao Sports Complex	April 6, 2003
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Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

VISAYAS BUREAU
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E-mail: pdmlnda@dvwebline.com

Probe of religious cult in Cebu sought

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Local officials have sought an investigation on the "religious cult" in a mountain village in this city after former members accused their leader of sexual abuse, swindling and treasure hunting.

Cebu City Councilor Gerardo Carillo directed the city's Commission on the Welfare of Children to look into the reports that the children of Salve Me Pater Omnis Oculus Meus members were locked up in their house in Sitio Nazareth, Barangay Buhisan, Cebu City. He said the commission should look into reports that the children were not allowed to go to school.

Carillo also questioned the legality of

the group's treasure hunting activities as no permits had been issued to Alfredo Verano, the leader of the Salve Me Pater Omnis Oculus Meus, which means "Father, Save Us from All Our Offenses."

Alejandro Alonso, Commission on Human Rights regional director, also ordered to immediately look into the report especially on the allegations of swindling and sexual abuse.

He told the INQUIRER that they might

join the fact-finding investigation initiated by the city government to consolidate all the findings.

The group, composed of about 30 long-haired men and a number of women and children, has been living in Sitio Nazareth for five years.

They live in a wooden house that reaches up to five stories high and sits in a mountain overlooking the metropolis. Near their homes were manmade caves.

Some 150 residents of Barangay Buhisan signed a petition, seeking the eviction of the cult members in the wake of allegations of sexual abuse committed by Verano, 57, and a retired military man. His members called him "Daddy Divine."

Two former members of the religious

group signed sworn statements, accusing Verano of allegedly deceiving the members and sexually molesting some of the members.

They were Lolita Alcover, 41 and Cherrie Wafer, 20, who enumerated on their affidavits the alleged abuses committed by Verano on his followers.

Wafer said she stayed with the group only for two months. While she was still a member, their leader would tell them to sleep in the nearby cave, wearing only their underwear.

She told reporters she decided to get out of the group after she saw Verano allegedly having sex with a female member who was married.

She also alleged that the children were physically abused when they failed

to follow their leader's instructions.

Wafer said Verano allegedly burned the sex organs of the male members with lighted cigarette butts to prepare them to become warriors.

When interviewed, the boys strongly denied these allegations. Reporters, however, saw children below nine years old, digging in the caves when they went to the area with city officials.

Alcover claimed in her sworn statement that Verano told her to hold his sex organ and take care of it so it would be hers in three days.

She also alleged that Verano lured her into giving him P20,000 with the promise that the money would be returned to her 15 times as much.

Group promotes reconciliation

BAGUIO CITY—As part of the celebration of the world meeting of families this year, several government agencies here are exerting efforts to reconcile jailed youth offenders with their families.

Betty Fangasan, head of the city social welfare and development here, said she has been coordinating with local governments in the country to bail out their young offenders from the Baguio City jail.

"Two mayors in La Union have responded to our request to come and get their people," she said.

Several of the jailed youth offenders came from La Union, Pangasinan and Tarlac.

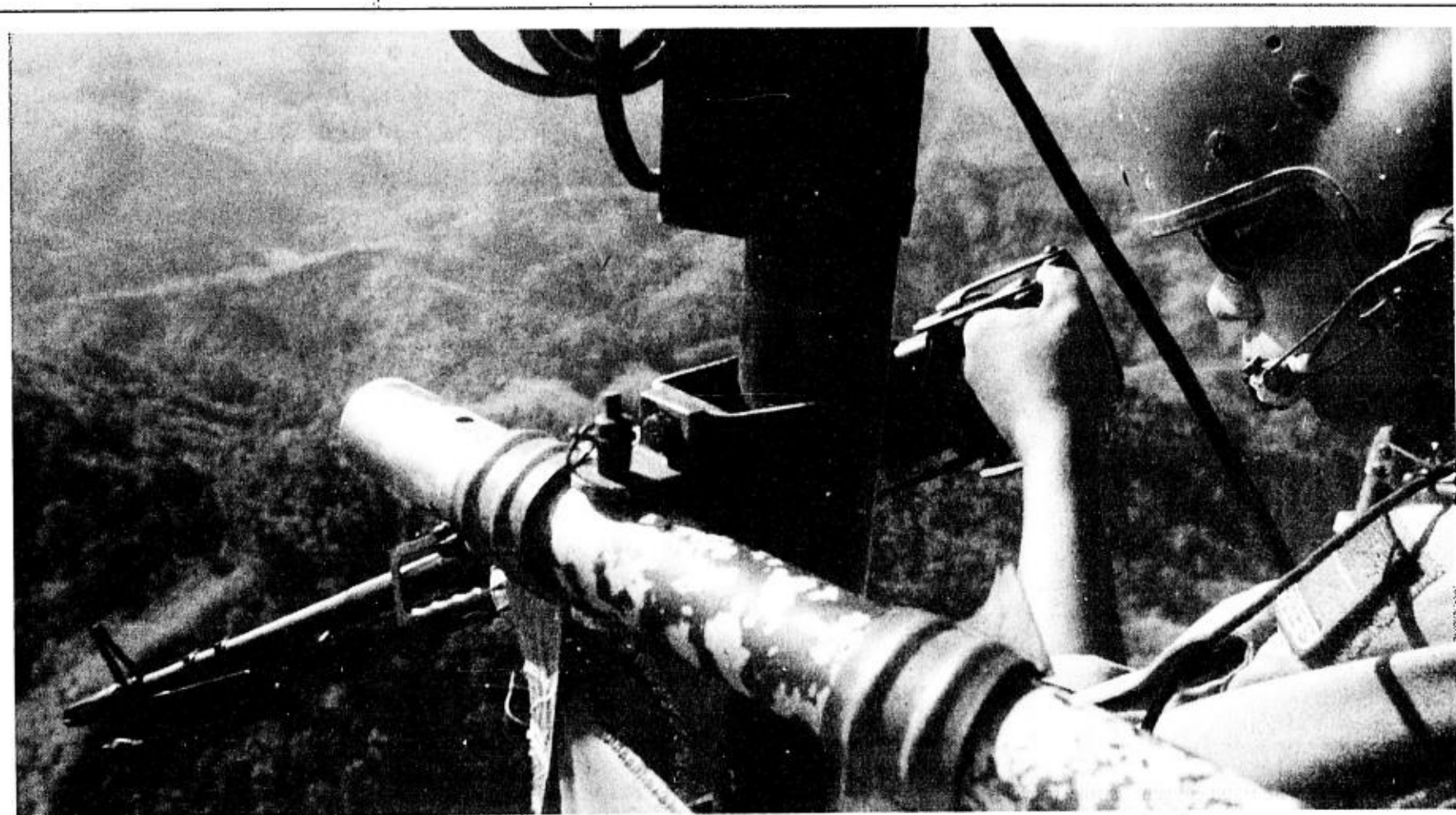
The Juvenile Justice Network (JJN), an association formed by several government agencies, non-government groups and the Catholic Church, is promoting restorative justice, which intends to oversee that children's rights are not violated.

The network also intends to provide legal, moral and spiritual assistance to youth offenders as well as "make sure that they restore their confidence to go back to mainstream community" Fangasan said.

At least 22 youth offenders are detained at the Baguio City jail. Their ages range from 12 to 16. Fifteen of them are undergoing rehabilitation at the Lingap Center of the Department of Social Welfare and Development in Cordillera.

Fangasan said her office handled at least 346 cases of juvenile delinquents last year. Most of these minors violated the curfew ordinance.

"Some parents could no longer tolerate the behavior of their children so they bring the matter to us. We investigate and put the minor in rehabilitation center if necessary," Fangasan said. Jovelyn Reyes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau



REBEL HUNTER

A Helicopter gunner keeps his eyes glued on the mountains for sightings of retreating Moro rebels in the hinterlands of Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte.

5 workers injured in Bataan ecozone strike

MARIVELES, Bataan—Five people were hurt Tuesday when police tried to break the picketline of striking workers of a Korean firm manufacturing backpacks and traveling bags at the Bataan economic zone.

About 600 workers of the Yusing Adven-

ture have been on strike since Dec. 16 following the retrenchment of 11 workers, nine of them ranking officials of the workers' union.

Jane Agbu, union secretary, said the management started retrenching union officials after she and other workers put up the union.

She said the management remained firm in its stand against the reinstatement of 11 workers, the main issue of the strike.

The management, Agbu said, had asked the assistance of 40 police and military personnel Tuesday when five workers including Alfonso

Moldin, union vice president, were hurt.

The latest BEZ strike sent a new wave of sympathy moves from various labor unions in the country's first economic zone similar to the early 1980s. Greg Refracion, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Squatters destroy mangroves for shelter

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Informal settlers are destroying the mangroves in this city's environmental estate.

According to a report of the city's anti-squatting unit, about 5 to 20 families have been squatting on the area supposed to be reserved for the construction of a retirement village and of small and medium-scale industries in the future.

Some city government officials and the anti-squatting unit on Wednesday visited the environmental estate, located at Barangay Sta. Lucia, a mountainous cove about 30 kilometer from the city's main district.

They found that the mangrove swamps have been ravaged because residents living in the area have cut the trees to build shanties.

The whole of Palawan was declared as a mangrove sanctuary. Cutting of mangrove, a breeding ground and habitat of fishes, is illegal under the law.

City environment and natural resources officer Rogelio Daquer said he would as-

sess the damage of mangrove swamps as soon as the reports are all collated.

The environmental estate used to be a sub-colony of Iwahig Prison and Penal Farm.

The city government regained ownership from the Department of Justice because the vast land is an ideal place for eco-zones, which are environment friendly and quite far from the congested poblacion.

A small portion of it, fronting the sea, is being used in sea ranching by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

Its proposed master plan had already been presented but it has been forestalled due to the change in administration after the 2001 elections.

It is expected that plans for it will push through with the comeback of Mayor Edward Hagedorn.

The squatters were previously demolished in the past but they returned because they did not have any place to go due to poverty. Jofelle Tesorio, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Suspended DAR exec files case vs Braganza

By Agnes E. Donato

ONLY days before newly-named Press Secretary Hernani Braganza leaves his post as Department of Agrarian Reform head, a provincial agrarian reform adjudicator he had suspended filed a civil case against him.

Napoleon Baguilat, a DAR adjudicator for South Nueva Ecija who had ordered the arrest of Land Bank President Margarito Teves last May, filed his petition for temporary restraining order against Braganza before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 223 late last week.

In his petition, Baguilat asked the court to stop the implementation of a suspension order Braganza had issued against him.

He maintained that he was a presidential appointee and that Braganza had no power to suspend or mete out any administrative disciplinary sanction against him.

"(I am) not under the administrative disciplinary jurisdiction of (Braganza). (I am) a presidential appointee and, as

such, is under the disciplining authority solely of the President of the Republic," he said.

He also claimed that even if Braganza had jurisdiction over him, his suspension order would still have no bearing as it did not undergo due process.

Baguilat related that after he learned about Braganza's recommendation for his suspension last June, he repeatedly tried to get a copy of it. But DAR officials reportedly refused to give him one, saying that only the Office of the President had the power to do so.

He said that in September, he got a letter from Braganza's office informing him that a "fact-finding investigation" was being conducted regarding the recommendation for his suspension.

He, however, added that after that, the DAR neither communicated with him nor summoned him to any investigation.

"Thus, it came as a complete surprise to (me) that (Braganza), apparently on Dec. 11, 2002, issued a supposed order... placing (me) under preventive suspension for 90 days," Baguilat said.

He related that he received his copy of the suspension order last Jan. 6 and it was accompanied by a charge sheet signed by Braganza.

He said it was only then that he found out that Braganza had issued a special order last May 24 creating a committee that would investigate "the circumstances leading to the arrest of LBP President Margarito Teves."

The committee, it turned out, had conducted an investigation and "found that a prima facie case exists against (Baguilat) for Oppression and Grave Misconduct, Gross Neglect of Duty and Conduct Prejudicial to the Best Interest of the Service."

Baguilat ordered Teves arrested last May 24 after the Land Bank president allegedly failed to comply with the adjudicator's order for him to deposit the compensation the bank owed some property owners from Cabanatuan City.

The DAR, however, had claimed that Baguilat did not follow the procedure and issued the arrest warrant with undue haste.

It pays to be smart as swindlers go high-tech via mobile phones

By Maurice Malanes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—In these trying times, it pays to be smart rather than be gullible to any offers of opportunity for instant wealth.

Take the case of a young couple who almost lost the money for their house rent this month when they were almost swindled through a scam via mobile phone communication.

Couple Charita and Ruben de los Reyes were mulling over what the Year of the Goat had in store for them when they received a cellular phone text message on Jan. 3, which said their cellular phone number had won P300,000 and a Starex van in a lottery.

The message said De los Reyes' mobile

phone number was picked out in a "home partner lottery" last Oct. 27 in Cebu City.

For details, the text message instructed De los Reyes to call Karen Cruz of Philippine Communications Center in Olongapo City through her mobile phone number—09185552810.

Charita de los Reyes immediately called Cruz who instructed her to call a certain Armando Garcia through his mobile phone—09203131647. Cruz introduced Garcia as the general manager of Matsumi Corp. with business address at 188 Sergio Osmena Blvd. in Cebu City.

De los Reyes called Garcia who instructed him to prepare two valid identification cards, a marriage contract, a residence certificate, and her cellular phone's Personal Unlocking Key (PUK)

number. If the PUK number was lost, an affidavit of loss could suffice.

Garcia told De los Reyes to speed up the required documents and send these to his Cebu business address. Otherwise, he said the P300,000 and Starex van prize would be forfeited as Jan. 3 was the last day.

Garcia also told De los Reyes to prepare P8,900, which Garcia would need in processing the registration of the Starex van.

He told De los Reyes to deposit the amount in the account of one Ivy Duran—Philippine National Bank Savings Account No. 398-508554-3.

Both Charita and Ruben de los Reyes immediately prepared the required documents, which were ready by noon of Jan. 3. But before they deposited the P8,900 at Duran's PNB account, the couple went to

the Smart Communications office here to verify if there indeed was such a lottery.

The couple was told they were lucky they did not deposit the P8,900 because the supposed lottery was all a hoax and a swindling scam.

Other people had had similar experiences, but what was unfortunate, the Smart personnel told the couple, was that they already deposited some money before they verified with Smart.

"We should have lost what we already reserved for our monthly house rent," said Charita, who teaches at a university here.

She said she was grateful that her husband Ruben, a government doctor, was smart enough to insist that they should verify first with the telecommunications firm before depositing any money.



169 doctors from US conducts biggest medical mission today

By Raj Padilla and Hazel Villa
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—For five days, the poorest of the poor in Iloilo will be given the rare opportunity to avail themselves of free medical and surgical help from a group of strangers.

The 169-member delegation from the United States composed of doctors, dentists, nurses and medical support staff arrived Saturday to conduct a five-day medical mission dubbed as "Mission of Love."

Dr. Carmen Bayate, Iloilo provincial health officer, described "Mission of Love" as the biggest medical and surgical mission ever in Iloilo.

It is co-sponsored by the provincial government of Iloilo and the Iloilo National High School (INHS).

The medical missionaries all belong to the Philippine Medical Society of

Northern California (PMSNC), now on their 16th annual medical mission to the Philippines.

The free consultations will be held at the INHS campus starting today and up to Friday. Major and minor surgeries will be undertaken at the Iloilo Provincial Hospital in Pototan town, which is a 25-minute drive from this city.

The medical mission will also give basic health services like vaccinations, dental procedures and standard examinations that not all Ilonggos can avail of. Other medical services also include the distribution of pharmaceuticals.

She said the mission would benefit about 12,000 Ilonggos with at least 600 of them to undergo surgical operations.

Dr. Patricia Grace Trabado, Iloilo assistant provincial health officer, said the mission team would cater to as many as 2,500 patients a day from each of the province's five congressional districts.

Trabado said only those who could present referral slips from their respective rural health units would be accommodated.

"We are looking forward to a lot of hard work in the days to come. We'll try our best to do quality work so that each patient would only get the best," said Dr. Corazon de Guzman, PMSNC president, during the welcome program tendered by the Iloilo provincial government at the INHS Compound.

Dr. Angelo Ozoa, chief of the mission and coordinator, said 225 volunteered for the mission but only 169 could be accommodated.

"It's a big headache on our part to turn away people who would want to come. Not all can be accommodated," Dr. Ozoa said. He said they selected the 169 "on the basis of what they can do."

Ozoa said many signified their intention to join the mission because they too knew that their countrymen needed their help.

"Filipino doctors are even regarded as better than their American counterparts. They are better trained in terms of doctor-patient relationship. They are nice, more caring and have better bedside manners," said Dr. Reynaldo Cordero, head of the mission's surgical team.

Dr. Marlene Cordero, Reynaldo's wife who is also a member of the mission team, said the team has more than enough medicines to be distributed.

A group of San Francisco-based Filipino doctors organized the PMSNC in 1972.

"From six to 12 members, their number grew to more than 150 at present," said Marlene.

She said the group's first medical mission was held in Masbate in 1986 with only six balikbayan doctors participating.

She said they received donations from their members, grateful patients and various foundations.

LTO, transport groups in C. Luzon agree to suspend Clean Air Act implementation

OLONGAPO CITY—Officials of the Land and Transportation Office and transport groups in the region agreed to indefinitely suspend the implementation of the Clean Air Act following a dialogue on Wednesday.

Jesus Ma. Vitug, LTO Central Luzon director, said they allowed drivers and operators of public utility vehicles and tricycles here not to immediately comply with the implementation of the mandatory vehicle emission tests since the government has not enough emission testing centers in the region.

The test and compliance with the Clean Air Act's smoke emission standards were set as requirements for the renewal of vehicle registration.

Vitug said the transportation sector is not yet ready to comply with the provisions of the Clean Air Act.

"The people were surprised with that law. They can easily accept the law had it been adequately explained to them," Vitug said during the dialogue with officials and members of Olongapo City Tricycle Operators and

Drivers Association Inc. and the Federation of Public Utility Transportation Services of Olongapo.

Mario Visda, chair of the Zambales Operators and Drivers Cooperative Association, said they were willing to comply with the provisions of the Clean Air Act if they would only be given enough time.

"With the execution of the Clean Air Act, we cannot disregard the fact that there will always be humanitarian concerns and that somewhere along the way, some sectors will be greatly affected," Vitug said.

But he assured that the implementation of the Clean Air Act, despite the confusion it had generated, was aimed at serving the public.

During the dialogue, the LTO and the transport groups agreed on the gradual phaseout of two-stroke tricycles.

The drivers and operators said they would ask the government to stop the importation of two-stroke engines that emit toxic fumes. Allan Macatuno, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Fake SK exec dupes officials

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—Provincial officials here were shocked after a 17-year-old male, whom they believed would bring in millions of pesos worth of donations for youth organizations in the province, turned out to be a fake.

Agents of the National Bureau of Investigation on Friday arrested one Marvin Marquez for charges of usurpation of authority based on complaints filed by Sangguniang Kabataan officials here.

Marquez, who reportedly introduced himself as a national official of SK and the federation president of Parañaque City, was offering donations supposedly sponsored by the national SK national federation.

Showing the usual Filipino hospitality, SK chairpersons here led by Bayombong SK president Oliver Chancoco and their council members treated Marquez to dinner at a classy restaurant here on Thursday.

"There he explained to us the (supposed) present programs of SK national president Ariel Joseph Arcillas, including a computer donation program and other benefits for SK officials," Chancoco said. "We were so stupid we believed his stories."

When asked by the INQUIRER about his pronouncements, Marquez said: "Gawa-gawa ko lang (I fabricated those stories)."

Quoting Marquez, Chancoco said the national SK government has chosen Nueva Vizcaya to be the recipient of various donations, includ-

ing a personal computer set for each of the SK organizations in the 275 barangays, cellular phones and cash.

"He said each SK municipal federation president will receive a (Nokia) 7650 phone and P10,000 discretionary fund, while Barangay SK Chair will get a Nokia 8210 and P3,000 each," said Chancoco, who was among the complainants.

But Chancoco said Marquez asked the SK officials to shell out P300 each as registration and subscription fees for the identification cards to be issued to the SK officials.

"Many of our SK kagawad (council members) have volunteered their payment because they were really interested in the program," he said.

Even Vice Gov. Luisa Cuaresma, who met with Marquez on Friday, was not spared of the suspect's hoax, as she immediately ordered the preparation of storage rooms at the Sangguniang Panlalawigan to accommodate the computer donations supposedly from the SK national federation.

But the results of an inquiry made by the provincial board's staff contradicted Marquez's claims.

The SK national secretariat sent a certification by fax to the provincial board that the SK federation president of Parañaque City is John Paulo Marquez, son of City Mayor Joey Marquez, and not the suspect. Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

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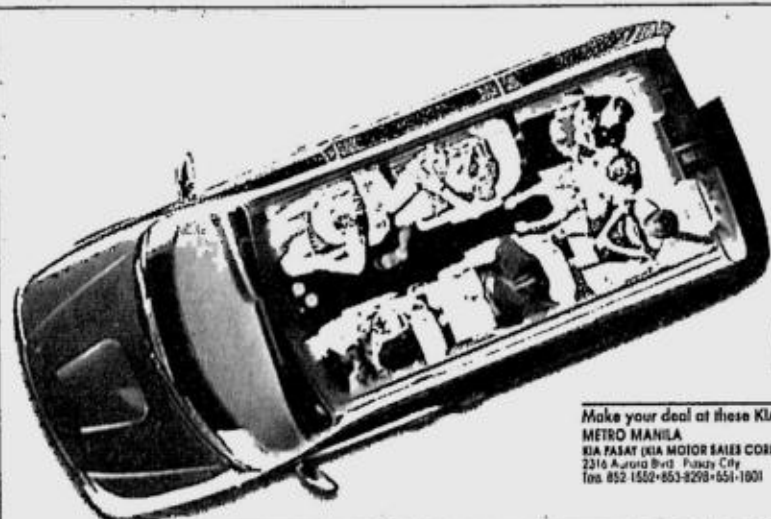
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ROUNDUP

It's Shell not Caltex

IN THE STORY "5.5M lost in fire" (INQUIRER, 1/7/2003), Choy Dimasaka of the Pagsanjan Fire Department identified the damaged gasoline station as Caltex. The correspondent who wrote the story later found out that the gasoline station was that of Shell. We regret the error.

2 teeners slain

SAN MIGUEL, Bulacan—Two teenagers were killed Tuesday when their van smashed into a Manila-bound bus on the Cagayan Valley road in Barangay Tikpalas here, police said. Killed were Ferdinand Cruz, 19, and Gerald Tapal, 17. Police said Cruz, who was driving the van, tried to overtake a vehicle and collided with a Baliuag Transit bus.

Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Baguio flower fest

BAGUIO CITY—This year's Baguio flower festival called "Panagbenga 2003" will run 18 events starting Feb. 1. President Macapagal-Arroyo is expected to attend the opening. The Panagbenga, which means a season of blossoming, has lined up activities such as a street dancing, a fluvial parade and landscape and floral competitions. The festival will also honor Macario Foronda, who composed the Panagbenga theme song, for his contribution to the festival.

Desiree Caluzo, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

2 killed in collision

BAUAN, Batangas—Two passengers were killed while three others were seriously injured when an owner-type jeep collided with a truck in Barangay Manghiniao of this town on Jan. 8. Passengers Guillermo Mendoza, 35, and Joel Abarquez, 24, both residents of Manghiniao, were pronounced dead on arrival at the Bejasa General Hospital while other passengers Edgardo Vendiola, 23, Crismare Majaba, 23, both residents of San Pablo City, and John Allen, 35, resident of Panioan, Leyte, were injured. Mei Magsino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Hijack victims found

MALVAR, Batangas—The Southern Tagalog Access Road (Star) Patrol found three men from Meycauayan, Bulacan at around 4 a.m. Wednesday, two hours after they were hijacked, along Malvar town. Police identified the three as Pascual Camu, driver, and Porfirio Gomez and Dexter Dortino, both truck helpers. The three said Camu was driving the truck containing noodles worth P500,000 in Meycauayan, Bulacan at 2 a.m. when a green van blocked their way. Eight armed men forcibly took their truck, blindfolded them, and pushed them into the van. They were dumped along the Star highway.

Mei Magsino, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

San Pablo holiday

SAN PABLO CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo has proclaimed Jan. 15, Wednesday, a non-working holiday in San Pablo City in time for the celebration of the Feast Day of Saint Paul, the First Hermit, this city's patron saint. Mayor Florante L. Aquino said this will give opportunity to the residents to observe their traditional religious activities.

Romulo Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Illegal logs seized

MAUBAN, Quezon—A police checkpoint along the Quezon provincial road in Barangay Poloc, this town, intercepted a six-wheeler cargo truck loaded with undocumented 29 pieces of luan logs worth about P30,000 last Tuesday. Investigation said a joint patrol team from the local police and the 417th Provincial Police Mobile Group seized the illegal logs. Police identified the suspects as Crisanta Banagan, owner of the Isuzu truck; Victor de Vera, Richard de los Reyes, Andres and Jose Tives, all truck helpers; and driver Romer Bondocoy, all residents of this municipality. The hot logs were allegedly owned by Erning Custodio, also of the same town. Dellin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Woman's body found

BACOLOD CITY—The decomposing body of a woman believed to have been molested was found on Jan. 6 in a sugarcane plantation at Barangay Guinhalaran in Silay City, Negros Occidental. A farm worker discovered the body of Analee Canete, a resident of Guinhalaran, Silay, 14.4 kilometers north of this city. Police believed that she was molested because she was half-naked and her pants were found beside her. Apring Canete said his daughter had been missing since Christmas Eve.

Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau

School officer slain

BACOLOD CITY—Police are looking into the killing of an officer of the University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos (Uno-R) last Jan. 8. Renato Perez Lozada, 49, of Fuentebella Subd. was declared dead at the Corazon Locsin Montelibano Memorial Regional Hospital after an unidentified suspect stabbed him on Wednesday near the Libertad North Public Market at Amella Avenue here. Lozada, who directed the Uno-R Reserve Officer Training Corps, suffered stab wounds in different parts of his body from a 12-inch bladed weapon.

Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau

No ties with DepEd

NATIONWIDE Book Network, the private firm that operates Libro bookstores, clarifies the report that appeared in this section yesterday ("DepEd franchising"). Rowena Guatlo, the firm's business development manager, sent a press release that said "our company is into book franchising, not DepEd franchising." Our only intention is to help the DepEd attain a 1:1 textbook to student ratio, Guatlo said in the release.

Kids pursue poaching raps vs Sinos

By Jofelle Tesorio
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Twelve children represented by their parents have filed a motion to intervene as complainants in the case of poaching and illegal fishing against the 38 remaining Chinese poachers here.

The first in Palawan, the motion was heard Thursday by Judge Perfecto Pe of the Regional Trial Court Branch 52.

The motion, however, was not yet approved and was scheduled for another hearing on Jan. 21.

The petitioners are minors John Lawrence, John Miguel and John Jr. all surnamed Galit; Jabez, Jero and Jet Calal; Jarrod Lorenz and Patricia Ynaya Asignacion, Destiny Jane Baldera, Manuel Isaac Bernardino, Tara Jessica Chan, and Maria Eleni Natividad.

They seek to become a party of interest as complainants in the proceedings in court involving the Chinese poachers, citing the landmark case of Oposa vs Factoran.

According to their motion, the Supreme Court in that case recognized that children as well as "generations yet unborn" can sue on environmental causes of action.

"This case, however, has a special and novel element. Petitioners, minors, assert that they represent their generation as well as the generations yet unborn. We find no difficulty in the ruling that they can, for themselves, for others and for the succeeding generations, file a class suit," said environmental lawyer Grizelda Mayo-Anda, who is representing the petitioners.

Their personality to sue on behalf of the succeeding generations, Anda added, can only be based on the concept of intergenerational responsibility insofar as the constitutional right to a balanced and healthful ecology is concerned.

The motion further stated that under the concept of intergenerational responsibility, children and generations yet unborn may be considered as private offended parties in environmental violations and thus, entitled to private representation.

"An act of environmental destruction is an offense committed especially and with more gravity against children and generations yet unborn because it is they who will greatly suffer the effects as deprivation resulting from such devastation," the motion stated.

It also cited a discussion that transpired between members of the 1986 Constitutional Commission who said that the right to a balanced and healthful ecology carries with it the correlative duty to refrain from impairing the environment.

Lawyer for the Chinese nationals Zoilo Cruzat immediately filed his opposition to the motion.

He said the intervention of a private party in the prosecution of the criminal, such as of poaching and illegal fishing, is only in favor of the private offended party and only in so far as the civil aspect of the cases.

"The movants are not private offended parties nor an entitled to an award of civil liability so as to allow them to intervene . . .," he stated in his motion.

He reasoned that the Oposa vs Factoran

case is not applicable because it involves the filing of the class suit in a civil case and not involving the intervention of a person in the prosecution of a criminal case.

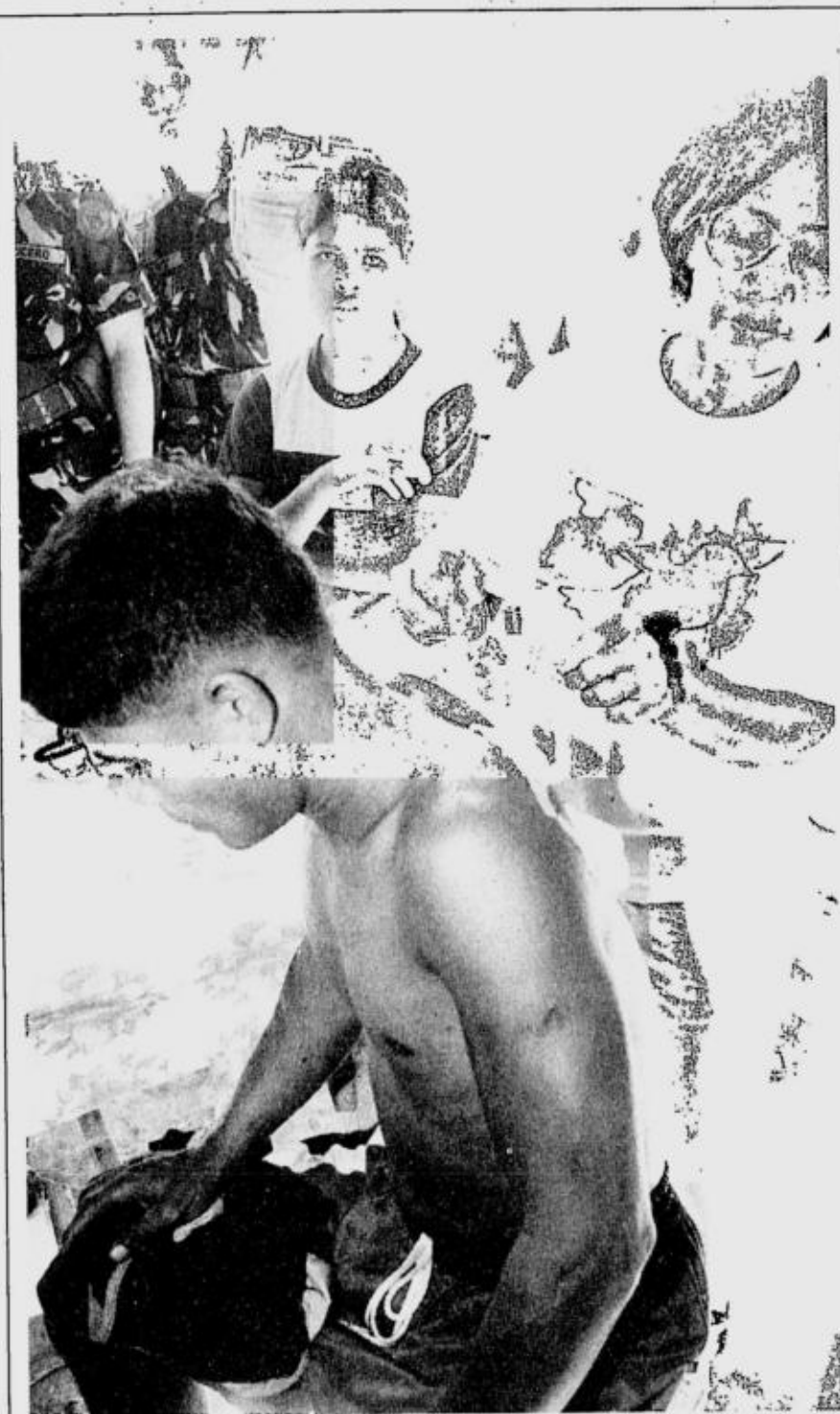
"The offended party is the Philippine Government and not anybody else and the movants are not the Philippine Government nor are they named in the information as offended," the opposition added.

The last batch of Chinese fishermen languishing in the provincial jail was caught on Sept 12 last year in the waters of Malampaya near El Nido.

Accused Tan Zi Xian and Qi Jia Run, captains of two fishing vessels and 36 others were found violating sections 87 and 88 of the Fisheries Code.

Found in their possession were more than 1,300 kilos of Groupers (Lapu-lapu), 300 kilos of Napoleon Wrasse (Mameng) and 300 kilos of Snappers (Maya-Maya).

The accused also possessed on board their vessel a bottle of homemade dynamite. Samples of their catch proved positive to sodium cyanide.



DRESSING DAY

A nurse dresses the wounds of Lito Tacuning, a civilian victim of an ambush by Moro rebels in the hinterlands of Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte on Jan. 8.

REUTERS

DA workers in ARMM urge GMA intervention for release of P14-M fund

By Charlie C. Señase
PDI Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—Department of Agriculture technicians in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) have sought President Macapagal-Arroyo's intervention to facilitate the immediate release of their cash incentives amounting to P14.5 million under the "Gintuang Masaganang Ani (GMA) Program" of the national government.

While other regional DA offices in the country had already availed of this benefit a long time ago, department technicians in the ARMM have yet to receive their share, declared some 75 complainants in their signed letter to Ms Macapagal and other concerned officials.

They said that since the launching of the program two years ago, "not a single centavo has reached us for the whole year of 2002."

An ARMM official explained that the delayed release of funds from the Department of Budget and Management was "the one causing the problem."

Haron Bandila, DA-ARMM assistant secretary, said last year that "less than P10 million" had been released for the GMA Program "but only P1 million" has been set aside for the technicians' allowance.

"The other day (Tuesday)," Bandila said, the central office released an additional P1.4 million that made a total of P2.4 million for the technicians' allowance.

In an urgent meeting Wednesday, DA-ARMM officials, according to Bandila, agreed to distribute equally the P2.4 mil-

lion to the 75 technicians "based on their work performance."

But, in Central Mindanao, DA technicians have already received their individual P2,000 monthly cash incentive for the whole year a long time ago, announced Abusama Alid, assistant regional director for operations.

Alid said the DBM disbursed last year a total of P98 million for Central Mindanao's GMA program, intended to enhance the country's grain production.

"The amount for the last quarter of nearly P3 million has yet to be released," Alid said.

DA Central Mindanao finance director Osmena Montaner said Local Government Unit-endorsed farm technicians were also recipients of the GMA "incentive allowance."

Bandila said "of the more than P40 million allocation for the GMA Program in the ARMM, only less than P10 million had so far been released last year."

The 75 ARMM technicians said that despite assurance made by former Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor to hasten the release of the budget, they have yet to receive the amount due them—P14.5 million.

Alid said Luis Lorenzo, the newly-installed agriculture secretary, is closely monitoring all priority programs of the department, including the GMA Program. He will see to it that disbursements of funds for the specific programs are in order.

"Surely, the new DA secretary will look into the plight of farmers and complaints of workers in regional offices," Alid said.

New eaglet needs godparents

DAVAO CITY—The first Philippine Eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*) for 2003 and the 12th eaglet bred in captivity was hatched Monday at the Philippine Eagle Center in Malagos, Baguio District here.

The still unnamed eaglet, which weighed 121 grams, was the second egg laid late last year from the natural pairing of Jag and Ka Brienne.

Jag and Ka Brienne have conceived other birds, including Pangarap, Maginoo, Bayani, Kapayapaan and Mia.

The eaglet was supposed to come out of its shell on Jan. 4 but its hatching was stalled for still unknown reasons.

Domingo Tadena, PEF deputy director for conservation breeding and team, said they were alarmed when the bird failed to break out of its shell so they help it out by slowly cracking the casing.

On Monday, it finally came out, alive.

Like all previously hatched eaglets, the newly hatched bird needs godpar-

ents, who would foot the bill for its feeds and other expenses.

The PEF-Adopt-an-Eagle Program aims to provide private individuals and companies the chance to become godparents of an eagle for P100,000 per year for six years.

Dennis Salvador, PEF executive director, said the center is expecting another eaglet this month and next month.

Both eggs were produced through the natural pairing of eagles Tsai and Princes Maasim.

The foundation now has 28 eagles.

One of the foundation's goals is to release offspring back into the wild to help complement the bird's population.

The Philippine Eagle, the world's largest bird of prey was declared an endangered species in 1965 and was named the country's national bird in 1995.

Today, there are only about 500 pairs of eagles remaining in the wild. Joselle R. Badilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau

NDF calls on Nur to renew struggle

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—The National Democratic Front in Mindanao said beleaguered Moro leader Nur Misuari should repudiate the Final Peace Agreement that his group signed with the Ramos administration in 1996 and continue with his struggle for self-determination.

Ka Oris, spokesperson of NDF-Mindanao, said the Final Peace Agreement, which was based on the Tripoli Agreement, did not help the Moro people achieve their aspirations.

"A succession of reactionary regimes never made good on their promise to the Moro people. Instead members of the Moro elite collaborated with these regimes to further disenfranchise the Moro people," Ka Oris told the INQUIRER.

He said the peace agreement has only succeeded in extinguishing the Moro Na-

tional Liberation Front's "revolutionary fervor."

"This has perpetuated the decades—old problems that beset the Bangsamoro homeland, problems that are rooted in economic exploitation, political oppression and cultural prejudice," Ka Oris said.

He said Misuari and his followers should look back to the heroic history of the Moro peoples' struggle and return to the revolutionary path.

"We call on Misuari and his group to establish and strengthen linkages with other legitimate revolutionary groups that aspire for the interests of the Bangsamoro and the Filipino people. The NDF under its 12-Point program, explicitly and consistently supports the struggle of the Bangsamoro for the right to self-determination," he said. Grace C. Albasin, PDI Mindanao Bureau

2002 a 'good' year for province, says Iloilo gov

ILOILO CITY—Gov. Niel Tupas has claimed that the year 2002 was a "good year" for the province.

In his State of the Province Address on Jan. 7, Tupas said that among his administration's accomplishments was putting a stop on the rampant cattle rustling, which had bothered farmers for years.

He, however, did not cite any figures in his speech before the provincial board members during their first session last Wednesday.

Tupas also claimed that Iloilo was the most peaceful province in Western Visayas last year. He said the average crime rate based on index crimes, or crime against property and persons, was at 3.26 percent, the lowest among all cities and provinces in the region.

Tupas said the province performed well

in agriculture as rice production reached a total of 535,000 metric tons last year, an increase of 15 percent from the previous year.

Despite the drought brought by El Niño, Tupas was confident that the yield for the second rice crop season would still be high.

Last year, Iloilo was second place nationwide in terms of rice production, up from fifth in 2001.

The provincial government is working with the Philippine Rice Research Institute on commercial hybrid rice production program.

Field tests in Mina, Pototan, Tubungan and Leganes towns showed that the hybrid rice varieties produced as much as 8.4 metric tons per hectare compared with the non-hybrid with an average of 5 metric tons.

Tupas said he would expand the cover-

age of hybrid rice production program so that the farmers could produce more, and make the province the country's number one rice producer.

In fishery, the province supports the proposed ban of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) on destructive fishing methods *hulbot-hulbot* (Danish seine) and similar fishing gears like *super-hulbot*, *palupad*, *zipper* and *trawl*.

The destructive gears are found in commercial vessels, or those with gross weight of 3.1 tons and up, that sometimes encroach on municipal waters, the portion within the 15-kilometer radius from the shoreline, in violation of the Fishery Code.

Tupas asked the BFAR not to issue licenses to commercial boats using the destructive fishing gears.

The campaign against illegal fishing saw the abundance of fish and other marine products, said Tupas. A fisherman can now bring home 5 to 10 kilos of fish using hook and line. But Tupas admitted that illegal fishing remains a problem in the province.

Last year, Iloilo was rated fourth in the country based on the Human Development Index, an indicator of a better quality of life because it measures life expectancy and literacy rates, among others.

Also last year the province won the title as the "Cleanest and Greenest" province in Western Visayas and was a finalist in the national level of the Gawad Pangulo sa Kapaligiran. It was the first time that Iloilo won the recognition in years, said Tupas.

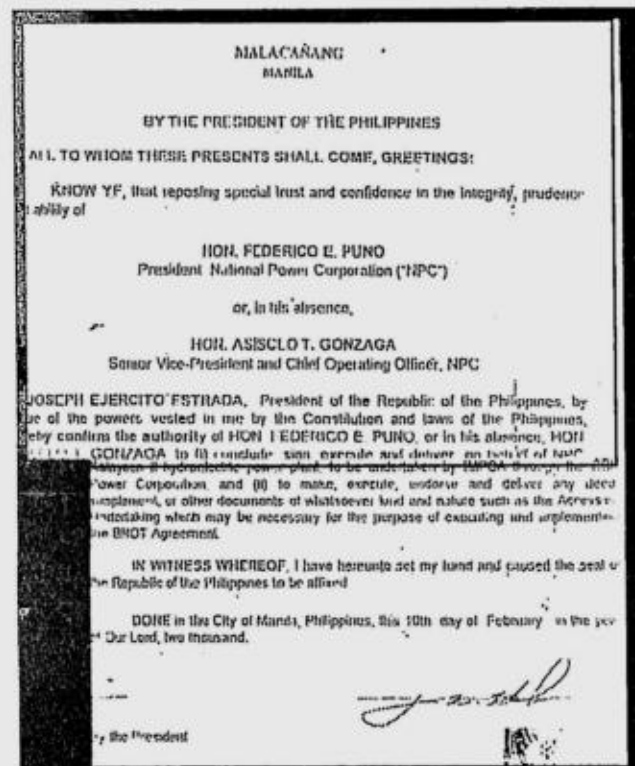
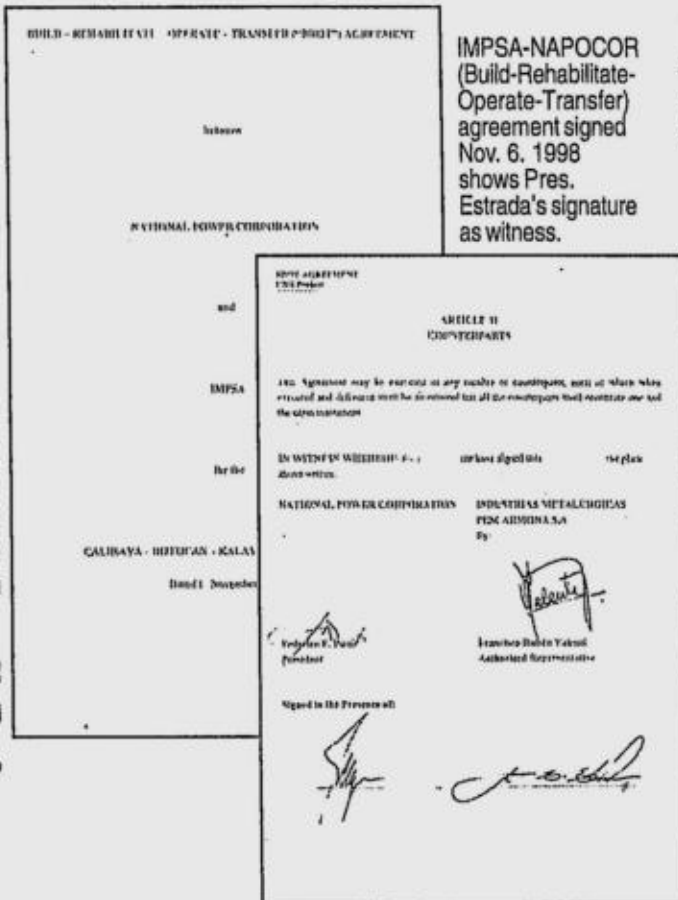
Ma. Diosa Labiste, PDI Visayas Bureau

PICTURES AND DOCUMENTS DON'T LIE

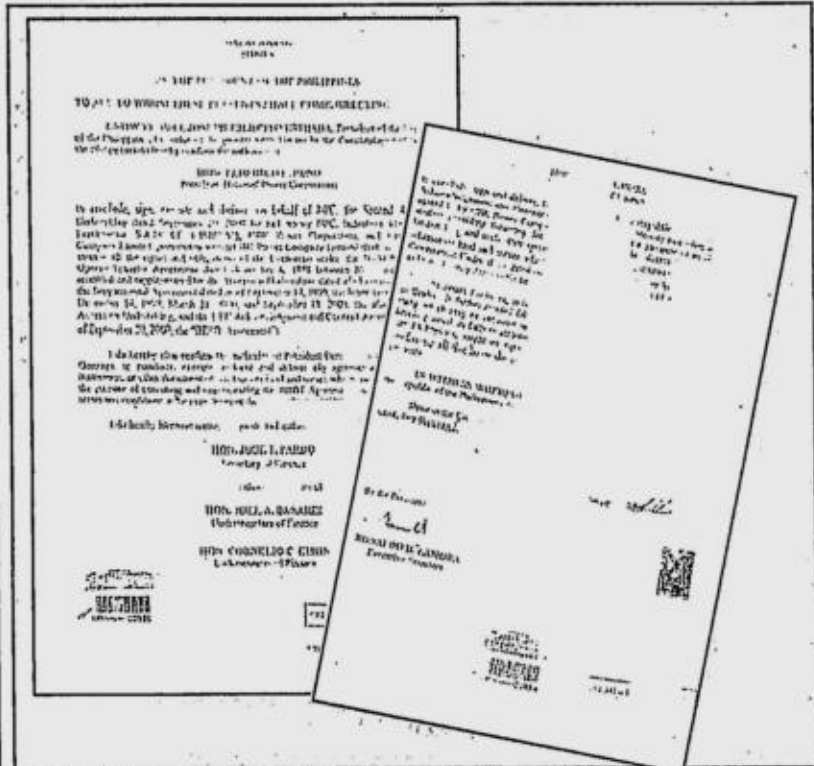
The truth about the IMPSA contract



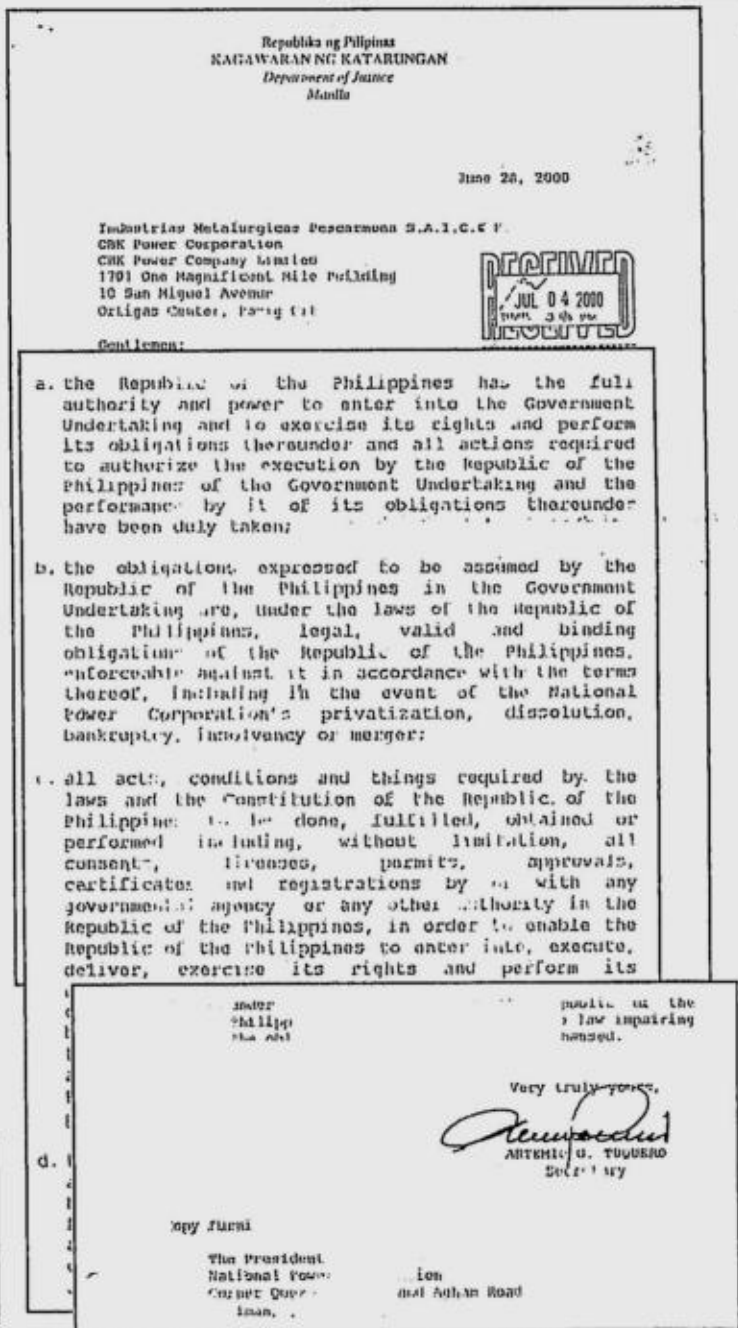
IMPSA CONTRACT SIGNING - President Joseph Estrada signs the IMPSA contract with National Power Corp. as witness at Malacañang while (from left) Executive Secretary Ronaldo Zamora (standing), Francisco Ruben Valenti, IMPSA authorized representative and Asisclo Gonzaga, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Napocor look on.



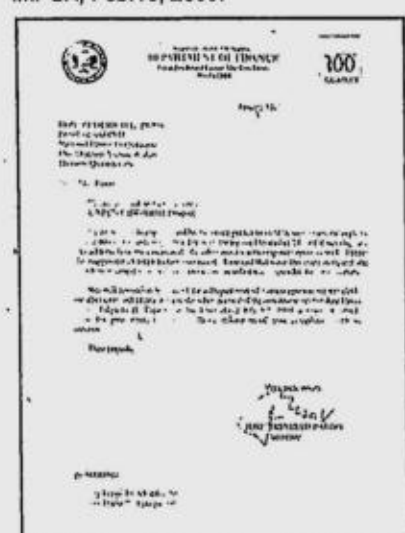
PRES. Estrada authorizes Napocor to sign BROT contract with IMPSA, Feb. 10, 2000.



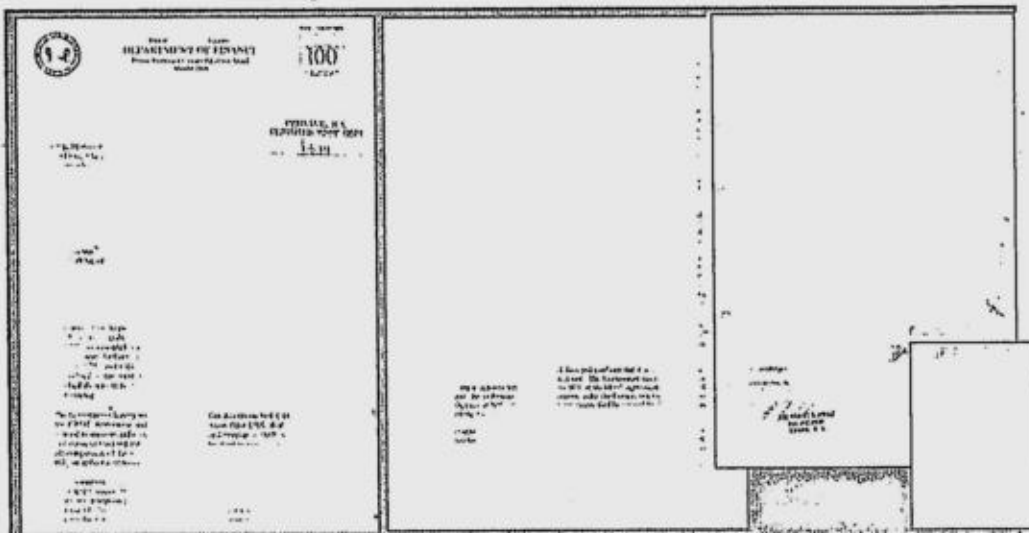
PRES. Estrada authorizes NPC and DOF officials to conclude the NPC-IMPSA BROT Agreement on Oct. 20, 2000.



JUSTICE Secretary Artemio Tuquero's letter to IMPSA June 28, 2000 which ruled on the legality of the Government Undertaking and the BROT agreement.



FINANCE Secretary Jose T. Pardo transmits GACA to NPC, Jan. 15, 2001.



GOVERNMENT Acknowledgment and Consent Agreement (GACA) signed Dec. 18, 2000 by Finance Secretary Jose T. Pardo and other government officials and representatives of local and foreign financial institutions.

'Full faith and credit'

Reprinted with permission from the Philippine Daily Inquirer, December 17, 2002 issue.

(THIS timeline of key events is based on official documents, copies of which were obtained by the INQUIRER)

NOV. 6, 1998: The Build-Rehabilitate-Operate-Transfer contract for the Caliraya-Botocan-Kalayaan power plant complex is signed by representatives of the Argentine firm Impsa and the National Power Corp. in Malacañang, with President Joseph Estrada as witness.

June 11, 1999: Napocor president Federico Puno requests the government, through Finance Secretary Edgardo Espiritu, to issue a Performance Undertaking because the "NPC cannot obtain the support of the international financial market (in) its current state without credit enhancement of the Republic."

June 17, 1999: Estrada executes "full powers" authorization to Espiritu and

undersecretaries to "sign, execute and deliver, for and on behalf of the Republic Philippines, the Government Undertaking in favor of Impsa."

July 12, 1999: The Government Undertaking is signed. It reads in part: "In order to facilitate these investments... we hereby confirm the obligations of NPC ... carry the full faith credit of the Republic of the Philippines and that

Republic ... will see to it that NPC shall be able to discharge at all times such obligations as they fall due."

June 28, 2000: In what is now known as the June Opinion, Justice Secretary Artemio Tuquero rules on the legality of the Government Undertaking and the BROT agreement (including three amendments or supplements).

Oct. 20, 2000: Estrada executes "full powers" authorization to Puno to "conclude, sign, execute and deliver" the Second Accession Undertaking and to Finance Secretary Jose Pardo and three

undersecretaries to "conclude, sign and deliver ... the Acknowledgment and Consent of the Republic."

Dec. 18, 2000: The Government Acknowledgment and Consent Agreement (Gaca) is signed. It reads in part: "We hereby confirm that the obligations of NPC under the BROT agreement carry the full faith and credit of the Republic of the Philippines and that the Republic ... will see to it that NPC shall be able to discharge at all times such obligation as they fall due."

Jan. 15, 2001: Pardo transmits the Gaca to Napocor's Puno for

signing. In his letter, he writes: "We will immediately request for a Department of Justice Opinion on this-Gaca."

Feb. 1, 2001: New Justice Secretary Hernando Perez issues an opinion dated Jan. 24, 2001 on the Gaca and related agreements or supplements, concluding - based on Tuquero's June Opinion and other previous official documents - that obligation by the government are "legal, valid and binding obligations of the Republic."

John Nery and Rey Leyesa, PDI Research

GMA wish: Estrada trial to end by 2004

From page A1

emphasis to micro-economic programs, the pro-poor programs will not take a backseat. "I don't want the poor to think that just because I'm not running, I'm not going to take care of them anymore."

• She expects Cabinet changes to continue. She said, "I always have to assess what I must do and who is the best person to do it."

• She did not comment on the suggestion that she could reenter the political stream if the presidential system is transformed to a parliamentary system, following the example of the return to power of Gen. Charles de Gaulle in France in 1958. She merely laughed.

The following is an edited text of excerpts of the interview:

Q. What broke the camel's back when you decided not to run in 2004?

A. There is no single incident. It's just that I gave myself a timetable to make a decision on whether running for reelection is going to be productive or not productive. Actually, even when I first became President, it was already an option not to run. It was already an option to be a transition president. I could have changed my mind. I did not want to make any announcement until I felt the time I knew that I wouldn't change my mind anymore. I have already gone more than half of my term. It's time to make a decision.

Q. What factors did you con-

sider in your decision?

A. In general, the tremendous poison in the air, plus the fact that I was doing things without thinking of 2004, and I was accused of things that I was not doing. So, if the accusations, which are false, begin to drive the reaction of those whose support I need to carry out to be a successful President, then it's time to clarify things, so that the suspicions will be erased.

Q. You can do more by ceding your reelection ambitions in exchange for space.

A. That is exactly (it), yes. Q. Do you realize you are in a revolutionary situation similar to that of President Corazon Aquino in 1986 when she exercised revolutionary powers and could have done anything?

A. I remember the last time that we talked about the powers of the presidency. Remember the Piatco controversy? That gave me a really good food for thought. I didn't have to be cautious because if you never test it, you will never know what's the limit. You just have to be willing to lose. In other words, if the court says you have overstepped your limit, well accept the ruling but at least it has been defined. ... We don't really know until the court rules. If you want to do things because you have the bedrock certainty that it can be done, then do it and test the limit. But if the court rules it is unconstitutional, let's accept it.

Q. How focussed are you in

your economic program?

A. In my [Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry] speech last December, I already put it in context that we had achieved macro-economic reforms and I said it again today [at the New Year's vin d'honneur]. The business community wants the structural microeconomic reforms. If I am going to talk about the results, by 2004, I would want macroeconomic reforms to be done by legislation and some other new initiatives that are now feasible because I am not running ... And then, we have to proceed also with the pro-poor programs because I don't want the poor to think (that) just because I'm not running I am not going to take care of them anymore. In other words I will attend to the pro-poor programs as if I were running.

Q. A European diplomat told me that a weakness of your Cabinet is that most of its members have no political constituency. Also, there seems to be a pattern in the Cabinet changes that members from civil society have been dismissed.

A. Members of the Cabinet did not have to be with me at Edsa so long as they carried out my policy. There is Dinky Soliman from civil society. There are technocrats in the Cabinet. Hernani Braganza came from Congress. Nani Perez certainly has a political constituency. I have the opposite criticism. A lot of people are saying I have too many politicians in the Cabinet. In other words, my Cabi-

net is quiet eclectic, and I am getting it from all sides.

Q. Will there be further Cabinet changes?

A. I can't say that. I always have to assess what is the work I must do and who is the best person to do it. I will repeat what I said about Dante Canlas (the former socioeconomic planning secretary). He was great as an economic manager and I would want him on my team still in some capacity but at this point, the business community needs microeconomic measures. Canlas did a good job in the first stage, which is macroeconomic stability. The next stage needs somebody that has another expertise.

Q. Will you be hands-on in the selection of the presidential candidates?

A. Yes, I will. But not now. This year it has to be no politics year for me. Yes, January 2004, but not now.

Q. Did your decision not to run again given you the space and environment to consider long-term solutions to the power issues—including the purchased power adjustment and Manila Electric Co.—without inviting a political fallout?

A. I can now consider the power sector as a whole, not just Meralco but the power sector in its entirety—power generation, transmission and distribution. That covers Napocor, Transco, Meralco, etc. but the key is privatization. That is a long-term solution in preparation

for the power shortage that will be experienced in 2005 by the economic growth we expect.

Q. Do you foreshadow turbulence coming from resistance to your new reform agenda?

A. Well, that has happened to me in the last 20 months, so what else is new? We just have to do what is right and fasten your seatbelts!

Q. Did you ever consider seeking emergency powers from Congress, the way President Ramos did to break the power shortage, in the event that your reform agenda encounters rough opposition?

A. I never thought about that. I am quite specific about my initiatives. They can be implemented within the framework of existing laws.

Q. Do you realize that when you decided not to run, you have opened a new political landscape and a way to change the rules of the political game in the space of 18 months?

A. I will try. I have defined the old politics as the politics of personality and patronage, and new politics is about party platforms, programs and institutional consultation with the people. That's what I have been working on in my concept of a strong republic. The translation of the concept is to my mind freedom from vested interests, a strong bureaucracy, and strong institutions that can deliver essential services.

Q. You have said you are neu-

tral on the issue of constitutional change. You don't have to do anything. If there will be constitutional change with a shift toward the parliamentary system, you can reenter politics. You are still young. There's a model. Gen. Charles de Gaulle [of France] headed a provisional government after liberation in 1945, but he resigned because he could not govern effectively with the "chaos of parties" of the Fourth Republic. He returned to power in 1958 to save France from civil war over the Algerian crisis and introduced a new Constitution giving strong powers to the presidency as the Fifth Republic.

A. [After a good laugh and a long pause] In the meantime, what I want to do during my retirement is to get into micro-financing that would stimulate entrepreneurship. I'll do some lectures at university.

Postscript: The interview was the most relaxed I have had with her. It was characterized by give and take, and it was held in the presence of Rigoberto Tiglao, now head of the Presidential Management Staff, and Ignacio Bunye, who replaced Tiglao as the President's spokesperson. The only time that she was very emphatic and firm was when she insisted that I should not press her on the issue of the change of Senate leadership. Three times she insisted: "I don't want to talk about that. I don't want to talk about politics. I don't want to talk about that at all."

GMA bid to unite with LDP assailed

From page A1

and a three-term congressman before he was elected to the Senate in 2001.

Apparently, Arroyo did not accept the President's categorical statement at the Philippine Stock Exchange on Friday that she was not interested in Charter change.

She had said then, to the general applause from business leaders and stockbrokers: "What we will not talk about is Charter change." She had also said: "I don't want people to misunderstand the reason for my decision not to run in 2004. The focus of discussion must therefore be exclusively the economy."

Tainted meetings?

Arroyo's media statement insinuated that the meetings between Ms Macapagal and Angara had betrayed the members

of the opposition.

"The President [should explain], to the majority senators and Senator Angara, to the opposition senators because were their meetings tainted with some badges of betrayal?"

Arroyo, saying that the Senate had not yet recovered from the attempted coup of the opposition in June last year, said the Senate was again "shaken" by reports that Senator Angara would be able to oust Senate President Franklin Drilon because five senators would be joining the ranks of the 10-member opposition.

He complained how "both sides frantically wracked their brains trying to identify who among the 13 majority senators were the five who were to desert the administration and cross over to the opposition."

"It turns out that there would be no would-be deserters from

the majority," Arroyo said. "Were the opposition senators aware that it would be their ranks that would be depleted? Only Senator Angara can answer that."

Another administration senator, who asked not to be named, said Drilon had been puzzled "who among the 10 opposition senators would actually go with Angara in a bid to muster a new majority."

"(Angara) was saying they had 15. But we knew from the start that Senators John (Osmeña) and Sergio Osmeña III were not voting with him, while Senators Luisa "Loi" Ejercito and Panfilo Lacson will definitely not join the majority that would be in a coalition with the administration," the source said.

Lakas welcome

But leaders of the ruling Lakas-Muslim Christian Democrats welcomed Angara's LDP as coalition partners.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said Lakas leaders had "come up with a resolution supporting the program of the President and this should be welcomed."

The resolution Bunye referred to was the one passed by Lakas leaders in a meeting chaired by Ms Macapagal on Jan. 8 that approved the formation of a "council of state" as vehicle for such unity government.

"The President is trying to



CONTROVERSIAL TROIKA: President Macapagal, Speaker Jose de Venecia and opposition Sen. Edgardo Angara at the Philippine Stock Exchange in Makati City last week.

ERIK ARAZAS

reach out to all sectors of society, including the opposition," Bunye said. "What's important is we have the support of all sectors for her program."

He said that what Ms Macapagal wanted was to get the support of legislators for the passage of "most-likely economic measures" in Congress.

"It isn't inordinate for the President to meet with the opposition," he said, referring to the two meetings held between Ms Macapagal and Angara.

Side issue

Bunye also sought to dispel suspicions that the President was

securing the opposition's support for amending the 1987 Constitution.

"The President's stand on Charter change is that legislators can talk about it as long as this doesn't lead to a postponement of the 2004 elections," he said.

A side issue in today's resumption of session would be the continued absence of administration Sen. Renato Cayetano, who should have assumed the Senate leadership from Drilon in accordance with a term-sharing agreement reached at the start of the 12th Congress. (See story on Page A1.)

Under the agreement, Drilon

would serve as Senate President for the first year-and-a-half of the three-year term with Cayetano serving out the remainder.

Drilon said Cayetano called him up yesterday afternoon to thank him "for holding the fort."

He added that all Cayetano could tell him was that "he is in the hospital and he is scheduled to undergo a 'procedure' in one month's time."

"I didn't ask him anymore what 'procedure' he was going to go through," Drilon said. Reports from Rocky Nazareno and Carlito Pablo

Cayetano in US hospital, waiting for liver donor

From page A1

forged with Senate President Franklin Drilon at the start of the 12th Congress in July 2001.

But "only God knows" the fate awaiting Cayetano, Senate President Pro Tempore Juan Flavio

concedes. Cayetano is afflicted with liver cirrhosis and is awaiting a liver donor. He is in a hospital in the US West Coast, joined by his family, including his son Patricio-Taguig Rep. Allan Peter Cayetano.

Because of Cayetano's absence, Flavio said the Senate majority had an informal understanding to maintain the status

quo until Cayetano's return.

"That's the only way we can make the arrangement. If he were here, we would honor that commitment because all of us [majority senators], except Sen. [Joker] Arroyo, signed the term-sharing agreement," Flavio said in a phone interview.

Drilon and Cayetano had a gentleman's agreement to take turns in serving as Senate President. Drilon's turn would have ended on Dec. 30.

"We will try to wait [for Cayetano] as long as we can. Then if the majority felt that the status quo should stay, then Senate President Drilon would finish the term up to the middle of this

year," Flavio said. The 12th Congress ends in June.

Though the next half of the Senate presidency is supposed to be held by Lakas in the person of Cayetano, Flavio expressed his disinterest in any leadership change.

"I am against any change in leadership because we lose one month (of work) every time there is a change," said Flavio, who is being pushed by some colleagues to take a shot at the post.

Flavio said the alleged coup to install opposition Sen. Edgardo Angara was "not there from the beginning" as it was only a rumor. He said Drilon would keep the post.

Flavio, a medical doctor, said the cirrhosis of Cayetano, who had been in the United States for about three months, was an offshoot of a Hepatitis-B infection.

He said Cayetano's condition could be considered serious because the function of his liver had been impaired.

A test for organ compatibility was reportedly conducted on Cayetano and his children, but it failed. Flavio said it was not surprising because Cayetano's wife was an American national.

Cayetano is now hoping to find a suitable liver donor. But the list is long. He is reportedly No. 250 on the list.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, January 13, 2003
1st Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading:
Gospel:

Heb 1:1-6
Mk 1:14-20

After John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee and began preaching the Good News of God. He said, "The time has come; the kingdom of God is at hand. Change your ways and believe the Good News."

As Jesus was walking along the shore of Lake Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net in the lake, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." At once, they left their nets and followed him. Jesus went a little farther on and saw James and John, the sons of Zebedee; they were in their boat mending their nets. Immediately, Jesus called them and they followed him, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men.

Commentary

Jesus explodes onto the scene in Mark's Gospel with the promise of newness. It was not the announcement of God's kingly rule that was new. After all, the symbol of "the kingdom of God" did not originate with Jesus. Israel had longed for centuries for that decisive saving intervention into history by God. What was new with Jesus was that, while he believed the fullness of that Kingdom was still to come, he also was convinced that in him and through his words and deeds, God was already breaking through into this tired, suffering world with the divine forces of healing and liberation. "This is the time of fulfillment." The Kingdom, dreamed about for ages, had come. Do we dare to believe this Good News?

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

JUDICIAL ETHICS—Presumption of regularity in the performance of duties—In administrative proceedings, the complainants have the burden of proving by substantial evidence the allegations in their complaints. In the absence of contrary evidence as in the case at bar, what will prevail is the presumption that the respondent has regularly performed his duties. The ground for the removal of a judicial officer should be established beyond reasonable doubt. Such is the rule where the charges on which the removal is sought is misconduct in office, willful neglect, corruption or incompetency. The general rule with regard to admissibility of evidence in criminal trials apply. The absence of any showing that respondent Justice acted with bad faith, ill-will or malice reduces the charges against him into a mere indictment. This Court can not give credence to charges based on mere suspicion and speculation. [Citations omitted.] [En Banc, Justice Ynares-Santiago, Tan V. Cosico, A. M. No. CA-02-23, July 31, 2002] DIGEST BY R. B. VERA

Want to save planet? Move back with ma, pa

From page A1

tion on Earth's wildlife, a study says.

"Rapid increase in household numbers, often manifested as urban sprawl, and resultant higher per capita consumption in smaller households pose serious challenges to biodiversity conservation," it warns.

Researchers led by Jianguo Liu of Michigan State University estimated population growth, the

number of households and the average household size in 76 countries that have "biodiversity hot spots"—regions that are rich in threatened native species.

Between 1985 and 2000, an extra 155 million households were created in these "hot spot" countries, and on current trends, an additional 233 million households will be added from 2000 to 2015, according to the study.

The increase will inflict major stress on the environment, it says.

Every additional household gobbles up land and diverts water resources, thus reducing habitat for wildlife, and uses up wood for fuel or home building, adds pollution and increases greenhouse gas emissions.

Even in European countries where the human population is declining, such as Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain, the number of households is rising fast, driven by surging divorce rates and the decline of the tradition

whereby two or three generations live under one roof.

"Human population size and growth rate are often considered important drivers of biodiversity loss, whereas household dynamics are usually neglected," Liu reports in a letter, published by the British science journal Nature.

"Aggregate demographic statistics may mask substantial changes in the size and number of households, and their effects on biodiversity." AFP

Ano ang AMC?

Ang AMC o Average Monthly Compensation ay ang average na buwanang sweldo ng isang GSIS member sa kanyang last 3 years of service. Ito ang basehan, bukod sa taon ng serbisyo ng isang GSIS member, sa pag-compute ng kanyang Basic Monthly Pension.

Ano ang AMC Limit?

Sa ngayon, ang basehan ng pag-compute ng Basic Monthly Pension ay hanggang ₱16,000.00 lamang. Ang ₱16,000.00 na ito ang tinatawag na AMC Limit. Dito, ang pinakamalaking buwanang pensyon na makukuha ng GSIS member ay 'di tataas sa 90% ng ₱16,000.00, o 'di tataas sa ₱14,400.00 kada buwan.

Samakatuwid, kung ang average monthly compensation ng miyembro ay ₱20,000.00, ₱25,000.00 o higit pa, ang makukuha niyang pensyon ay 'di hihigit sa ₱14,400.00.

Ano ang idinidikta ng RA 8291 tungkol sa AMC Limit Removal?

Ang RA 8291 ay nagdidiktang tanggalin ang AMC Limit na ₱16,000.00!

Ang magiging basehan ng makukuhang pensyon ng GSIS member ay ang kanyang Actual Average Monthly Compensation!

Ano ang epekto ng AMC Limit Removal sa Basic Monthly Pension ng GSIS Members?

Sa mga GSIS Members na may average monthly compensation na mas mababa sa ₱16,000.00, walang epekto ang batas na ito. Pareho pa rin ang kanilang GSIS contribution amount at Basic Monthly Pension na makukuha.

Subalit sa mga miyembrong may average monthly compensation na mas mataas sa ₱16,000.00, dahil ang basehan ng kanilang Basic Monthly Pension ay ang kanilang Actual Average Monthly Compensation na, mas malaki ang makukuha nilang pensyon! At habang tumataas ang kanilang sweldo, tumataas din ang makukuha nilang pensyon!

KAKAMPI NATIN ANG BATAS!

Mula January 2003, wala nang limit sa implementasyon ng GSIS Retirement Law (RA 8291)

Ano ang epekto ng AMC Limit Removal sa monthly contributions ng mga miyembrong masasakupan ng RA 8291?

Sa pagtanggag ng AMC Limit, tataas nang bahagya ang personal contribution ng mga miyembrong tumatanggap ng higit sa ₱16,000.00 dahil ang kanilang kontribusyon ay base na sa kanilang aktwal na buwanang sweldo at hindi na sa AMC Limit na ₱16,000.00.

Bagama't tataas ang GSIS contribution ng mga apektadong miyembro dahil sa AMC Limit Removal, ating tandaan na ang karagdagang halagang ito ay mangangahulugang mas malaking pensyon na magbibigay ng kinabukasang mas maginhawa sa mga GSIS members at sa kanilang pamilya.

Ito y pag-iimpok o pamumuhunan ng mas malaki, para sa mas malalaking benepisyo t seguridad.

Ano ang Kinabukasan ng GSIS Members at ng Kanyang Pamilya sa AMC Limit Removal under RA 8291?

Pagdating ng araw na ang GSIS member ay hindi na makapagtrabaho, matutustusan pa rin niya ang kanyang sariling pangangailangan pati na rin ng kanyang mga mahal sa buhay nang walang kahirap-hirap! Maaari pa siyang makatanggap ng buwanang pensyon na **MAS MATAAS PA** kaysa sa kanyang buwanang sweldo noong siya y nagsisilbi pa sa gobyerno!

Sa hinaharap, mahirap nang pagkasyahin ang ₱14,400.00 buwan-buwan sa araw-araw na pangangailangan ng isang pamilya. Sa pamamagitan ng pagtanggag ng AMC Limit under RA 8291, mas malaking 'di-hamak ang matatanggap ng miyembro buwan-buwan mula sa GSIS! Mas malaking ginhawa!

**Todo ang benepisyo ng batas na ito!
Maximum Retirement Benefits!
Maximum Death Benefits!
Maximum Unemployment Benefits!**

**Benepisyong Todo-todo, Lubos na Seguridad Para sa Inyo!
Maximum Benefits, Security Without Limits!**

**Ang RA8291 ay isang pagtutulungan nina
Pangulong Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at ng GSIS
tungo sa mas maginhawang kinabukasan
ng mga GSIS members.**



GOVERNMENT SERVICE INSURANCE SYSTEM
Kahit Saan, Kahit Kailan, Maaasahan.
www.gsis.gov.ph

Threat of Islamic militants to persist, say experts

SINGAPORE—Muslim militants will remain a threat to Southeast Asia for years even if the US-led war against terrorism succeeds in dismantling the al-Qaida network, regional officials and analysts say.

Al-Qaida, blamed for the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, has forged a "brotherhood" with like-minded groups such as the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) to cement its regional footprints, Singapore's Home Affairs Ministry said in an official report.

"Southeast Asia has become vulnerable because there is a large Muslim population and there is weak governance," said terrorism analyst Rohan Gunaratna of the Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies (IDSS) here.

Singapore Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew has said the JI's ultimate

aim was to establish a caliphate comprising Malaysia, Indonesia, southern Philippines and Singapore.

IDSS director Barry Desker said the JI challenge needed a robust ideological response as militants saw jihad as a violent struggle and an obligation of all good Muslims.

"Unless such belief systems are challenged, new generations of JI activists will emerge," he said.

The Singapore government's "White Paper" on the terrorist threat said al-Qaida's "links with the regional brotherhood of militant Islamic groups have given it a strong foothold in Southeast Asia."

"The US-led military campaign in Afghanistan may have disrupted its bases there, but al-Qaida is still able to launch terrorist attacks by tapping the network of militant

groups in the region," it said.

Radical agenda

Southeast Asia's radical Muslim groups will continue to pursue al-Qaida's dream of a global jihad, or holy war, even if the organization's capabilities are eroded, the report said.

"With their radical agenda and their enhanced skills acquired from al-Qaida, these groups, if left unchecked, will pose a grave threat to the security of Southeast Asia for a long time to come," it said.

Gunaratna, author of a best-selling book on al-Qaida, told a seminar in Singapore last week that the organization may be reduced to a "state of mind" among Islamic radicals with the disruption of its network.

"Despite heavy losses, including the likely capture or death of its core and penultimate leaders,

al-Qaida's anti-Western universal jihad ideology... will sustain support for Islamism, Islamist political parties and Islamist terrorist groups," he said.

"The momentum al-Qaida has so successfully unleashed will spawn and sustain a dozen existing and emerging Islamist groups in the medium term," he said.

Continued US policy in the Middle East, seen to favor Israel, and an attack on Iraq could strengthen support for these radical groups, he said.

Afghan war

Analysts said one of the biggest influences on modern Islam in the region was the Afghan war against the Soviet Union from 1979 to 1989 in which hundreds of foreign Muslim fighters, including Southeast Asians, fought to expel Soviet forces.

"The war provided opportunities for key figures of these groups who went to Afghanistan to experience first-hand the glory of jihad and its eventual victory over the Soviet Union," the Singapore White Paper said.

It also taught them "sophisticated terrorist tradecraft and expertise" which they would propagate after they returned to their homelands, it said.

These deadly alumni formed a "loose but trusted" brotherhood of militants in the region.

Such close links allowed the Indonesian Islamic Liberation Front to help raise funds for the insurgent Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the southern Philippines and for the MILF to provide guerrilla warfare training to the separatist Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM).

The MILF's jungle-clad Camp

Abubakar guerrilla base in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao became a key training ground for the region's suspected terrorists, including members of the JI and al-Qaida, the White Paper said.

It is also through this network that al-Qaida "enjoys secure, reliable and easy access into Southeast Asia," it added.

Two of the al-Qaida operatives who crashed the plane into the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001 had stayed with Malaysian JI member Yazid Sufaat during a visit to Malaysia in January 2000.

Yazid and Faiz Bafana, who were arrested in Singapore, are believed to have provided assistance to Zacarias Moussaoui, the Frenchman indicted in connection with the September 2001 attacks, when he visited Malaysia in 2000, the paper said. **AFP**

Tourism up in Subic...

From page A1

in 2001. Jularbal, however, said that the figure did not include tourist arrivals last month.

"The extended holiday was a big help to the city's tourism industry. We monitored a 100-percent occupancy rate in all hotels," he said.

Jularbal attributed the decline in local tourist arrivals to the country's economic, political and security problems.

At the Subic Bay Freeport and in nearby areas, at least 7.9 million local and foreign tourists came for a visit last year.

The Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) tourism department said the figure was 14 percent higher than Subic's 6.9 million visitors, mostly Filipinos, in 2001. Foreign arrivals in 2002 rose 1.76 percent.

Good start

For Subic, "the first quarter of 2002, with its record of 2,454,505 visitor arrivals, set a good start for the entire year," said Armin Santos, SBMA tourism department manager.

"Although the figures dwindled during the rainy months, [arrivals] bounced back during the last quarter with the number of educational tours, seminars, conferences and special events reaching its peak," he added.

In his yearend report submitted to President Macapagal-Arroyo, SBMA Chair Felicitio Payumo said local tourists, who comprised the bulk of visitors, kept on patronizing Subic's facilities.

"Busloads of students, government and private workers have made Subic a favorite 'Lakbay-Aral' and company team-building venue as it offers the perfect combination of industry in the heart of nature,"

Payumo said.

DOT figures showed that December posted the highest number of local arrivals with some 1.2 million.

The opening of new facilities helped boost tourism at the freeport. They include the Forest Adventure Park, the Ocean Adventure, Garden of Peace and Greenwoods Park.

A water park, along with cottages and restaurants, will also be put up on Grande Island.

Southern Mindanao

Tourism also improved in Southern Mindanao, according to the department.

A DOT survey of hotels, inns, resorts and lodging houses found that the number of tourists, both local and foreign, in the region rose five percent to more than 350,000 in 2002.

Roger Layson, tourism spokesperson for Southern Mindanao, said the modest improvement was partly due to the peace and order situation, especially in Davao City.

Last year, boxing sensation Manny Pacquiao had a title bout with a Thai challenger in Davao City. "It really signaled a positive view of Davao, sparing it from adverse travel advisories by foreign countries," Layson said.

A tourism venture dubbed "Japan-Davao Centennial 2003" is now being undertaken by the DOT. Starting August, the project will bring Japanese tourists to Davao City where they can visit places that their countrymen once settled before and during World War II.

"It's an event we must look forward to," Layson said. *Reports from Allan Macatuno and Jovelyn Reyes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau; and Dennis Jay Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau*



THE SUBIC Bay Freeport's recreational facilities drew more foreign tourists last year compared to 2001 despite concerns about terrorist threats in the country.

PDI PHOTO

Palace displeased with new US travel advisory

From page A1

on Islamic militants.

"We're doing all we can to improve security and we're actually seeing an improvement in peace and order," Bunye said in an interview over RMN radio station.

In a separate interview over the same station, National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said "there are no specific threats aimed at the Philippines based on intelligence reports."

But Western intelligence

agencies have linked Abu Sayyaf bandits in Mindanao to the al-Qaida terror network of Osama bin Laden, the alleged mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

In October, a US soldier was among three people killed when the Abu Sayyaf exploded a bomb near a military base in Zamboanga City. US troops last year spent six months training and helping their Filipino counterparts against the Abu Sayyaf.

"What we can say is that the less we talk about these advisories, the better for the Philippines," Golez said.

Both Bunye and Golez said it was up to Foreign Secretary Blas Ople to make the proper representation with the United States regarding the latest advisory.

"We will continue to work through diplomatic channels to convince all countries, which put out travel advisories on the Philippines, to

withdraw or amend them," Ople said.

He noted that the embassies of Australia and Canada, which late last year shuttered due to what they claimed were "specific" terror threats, "have resumed full operations" after the police boosted security.

Ople said the advisories painted "a very unfair picture" of the country, especially as authorities had been working to crack down on terrorism. *Reports from Carlito Pablo and AFP*

US probes Madame Z report on Marcos loot

From page A1

dering of Marcos money as revealed by a former KPMG employee, Marie Gabriel Koller, the controversial witness who was identified before as Madame Z. She worked in 1996-1997 for KPMG Zurich where she got the "secret" information on the fund transfers.

Koller said at least \$400 million was transferred by Fides, the predecessor of KPMG Zurich, on March 24, 1986.

Only \$356 million in Marcos money was frozen in 1986. The amount, placed in a Philippine National Bank escrow account abroad, has since grown to more than \$700 million.

Information on the alleged laundering of Marcos money from Credit Suisse first appeared in the INQUIRER in May last year.

Burton asked the SEC in September last year to investigate KPMG International, particularly on its alleged role in the laundering of Marcos Swiss deposits before the implementation of a freeze order in March 1986.

Former Solicitor General Francisco Chavez, in August last year, also wrote the US SEC to investigate KPMG and the Union Bank of Switzerland for allegedly helping launder Marcos money.

Burton noted that his office had been informed that there was already evidence presented to the SEC against KPMG concerning "money laundering and subversion of a joint Philippine and Swiss freeze order for a series of accounts

containing millions of US dollars."

Aside from writing the SEC, Burton also asked the House subcommittee on capital markets and insurance, chaired by Rep. Richard Baker, to look into the matter.

Burton also wrote Rep. Spencer Bachus, chair of the House subcommittee on financial institutions, and Rep. Michael Oxley, chair of the committee on financial services, to look into the investigation of the SEC on the laundering of Marcos deposits participated in by KPMG.

Marcos foundations

According to Komisar, documents already in the hands of the US government include:

- Records found in Malacañang after the Marcoses left in February 1986 that had detailed transactions involving Marcos foundations and accounts in Switzerland and Liechtenstein;

- An affidavit from a Filipino banker, Michael de Guzman, who said that he was given a power of attorney in March 1986 to move Marcos money out of Switzerland. De Guzman later said that he was told by a Credit Suisse official that the transfer order was not needed because the Marcos foundations and account names had been changed to escape detection by Philippine and Swiss authorities.

- Testimony of Koller, who earlier testified before the French Parliamentary committee on how officials of Fides had moved overnight hundreds of millions of dollars of Marcos funds from Credit Suisse to Limag

AG, a subsidiary in Liechtenstein, just before the March 24, 1986 Swiss-imposed freeze. She said Swiss bank officials had already known that the order would be enforced.

Koller's information was earlier given to the Presidential Commission on Good Government, but the Philippine government agency, tasked with running after the ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses, largely ignored it because it was brought to its attention by Dr. David Chaikin, the Sydney-based lawyer of controversial Australian investigator Reiner Jacobi.

Koller passed on the information to the PCGG as early as September 2001. It was then brought to Malacañang's attention in March last year. Malacañang referred the matter to the PCGG again.

In her "initial proffer" to the Philippine government last March, Koller said she had learned that "in 1986, there was a leak that the Swiss Federal Council would issue an order seizing the Marcos funds."

Night transfer

"Before the court-ordered freeze went into effect, Fides worked through the night to transfer the funds, approximately (US)\$400 million, to a 'black' Credit Suisse subsidiary, Limag AG, in Liechtenstein," she told the Philippine government.

The Swiss freeze order took effect at 6 p.m. on March 24, 1986.

Limag AG is a Liechtenstein subsidiary of Credit Suisse Group, according to her information submitted by Koller's lawyers to the Philippine government.

PCGG Commissioner Ruben Carranza Jr. said he asked Swiss authorities when he went to Switzerland in October last year about the Marcos fund transfer. Earlier, Carranza denied that he had gone to Switzerland to meet with Swiss authorities.

He declined to comment on the US government's investigation of KPMG Zurich. He said the PCGG did not readily want to look into Koller's information before because it was first brought to Chaikin.

A PCGG official said the commission did not really want to work on any information provided by Jacobi because it might give him reason to press his contract with the PCGG. Jacobi had been providing the commission with information on the Marcos Swiss accounts since 1989 when he was first hired by the Philippine government.

During the administration of Joseph Estrada, the PCGG dropped Jacobi after he discovered that certain Estrada officials had come up with a secret operation, "Project Recovery," aimed at getting at least \$13 billion in Swiss deposits under the name of Marcos' youngest daughter, Irene Marcos Araneta.

The PCGG since then has accused Jacobi of forgery—a line that has been used by Swiss authorities to discredit the Australian investigator. It was Jacobi who first exposed that Swiss authorities, particularly former Zurich District Attorney Peter Cosandey, had been conspiring with Swiss banks to hide the Marcos Swiss deposits from the Philippine government.

Aides prop up Gloria's image as 'dragon slayer'

From page A1

cañang source, who requested anonymity.

"The President will leave a legacy as the dragon slayer, with members of her Cabinet acting as her knights," the source said.

The source, who is privy to the crafting of these supposedly sweeping reforms, was stingy on details except to say that these sweeping reforms will affect transportation, natural resources and agriculture, among other areas.

"The reforms will cover the traditional sources of political and financial support by the elite," the official said. "These will affect not only certain local and national politicians and political families but also some members of big business."

But the source hinted that specific situations sought to be corrected by reforms range from monopoly and cartel operations to outright illegal activities.

"There will be a series of executive actions on policies and government procedures that will make life harder for these dragons," the source said.

Shift in focus

The source explained that this is the rationale behind Ms Macapagal's policy pronouncement late last year that henceforth, she will shift her focus from macroeconomic to microeconomic management.

"Our macroeconomic indicators are healthy, from inflation to interest rates," the source said.

"The only problem remaining is the stranglehold of these dragons over certain economic sectors and we'll be targeting these."

The source said that two of the objectives in the reform drive are to "lower the cost of doing business" and to "level the playing field."

The official said that Romulo Neri, recently named head of the National Economic and Development Authority, was playing a key role in identifying and crafting of reform initiatives.

Neri, who impressed Ms Macapagal with his sector-by-sector approach, replaced Dante Canlas, whom the President credited for laying the groundwork for a stable macroeconomic environment.

Ms Macapagal herself had repeatedly hinted of the strong moves she would undertake in her remaining 18 months in office.

In a speech before the Philippine Stock Exchange on Jan. 10, the President said "temporary solutions" will no longer suffice if the government were to alleviate present miseries.

"We do need deep and far-reaching reforms that will lead to stronger political and social stability and to sustained economic reforms," she said.

SUERTRES 7 2 0
(In exact order)

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BASKETBALL: NBA - Memphis vs Sacramento, 10 a.m. (r - 10 p.m.), Solar Sports, Philadelphia vs Or-

lando, 7 p.m., IBC 13
AMERICAN FOOTBALL: NFL Divisional Playoff, 5 p.m. (r), ESPN

TENNIS: Best of Wimbledon 2002, 9 a.m. and 10:30 p.m. (r), Star Sports

DRAFT SURPRISE

Aces drop Duremdes, pick Cortez 1st

By June Navarro

ALASKA pulled off the biggest surprise during yesterday's PBA Annual Rookie Draft, dropping franchise player Kenneth Duremdes from its roster and shipping the 1998 MVP to Sta. Lucia Realty in exchange for two draft picks in the rookie lottery.

The overflow crowd at the Glorietta Activity Center was stunned by the Aces' decision to free the 6-foot-3 Duremdes that somehow stole the show from De La Salle playmaker Mike Cortez, this year's top draft pick.

"Everything went so quickly. Kenneth had sent feelers that he wanted to be traded. It will loosen up the salary cap and we can get younger guys at a cheaper price but more than anything else, I wish Kenneth stayed with us," said Alaska coach Tim Cone.

P48-million contract

The rest of Duremdes' P48-million, eight-year contract running up to 2008 will now be shouldered by the Realtors, who gave the Aces their No. 5 pick in the first and second rounds. "That's life," was all Duremdes could say.

"We are looking for a player in the No. 3 position. So we were surprised when coach Tim offered Duremdes to us. His leadership on the floor will motivate the team to play harder," said newly installed Sta. Lucia Realty coach Alfrancis Chua.

Alaska made the 6-foot Cortez the top overall pick while Barangay Ginebra, armed with the No. 2 choice, grabbed 6-foot-6 Rommel Adducul from the pool of 62 rookie aspirants.

"Being the first pick, Alaska and its fans have a lot of expectations from me. I hope to do good on my rookie year and with the help of my teammates I could achieve that," said the 22-year-old Cortez, who led the Green Archers to back-to-back UAAP titles (2000-2001).

Third in the draft order, Shell wasted no time getting the services of 2001 MBA MVP Eddie Laure while Talk N' Text almost surprised everybody when the Phone Pals pulled out Fil-American Harvey Carey from the pool. Carey is a

6-foot-3 bruiser who has a built similar to Alaska's Ali Peek.

Alaska used the No. 5 pick it acquired from the Realtors by getting hold of Brandon Lee Cablay, a 6-foot Hawaiian-born playmaker who played for Vanguard University.

Slotman Billy Mamaril, son of ex-PBA beanpole Romulo Mamaril, went to Purefoods (sixth), Red Bull (seventh) obtained UAAP MVP Enrico Villanueva of Ateneo and San Miguel Beer (eighth) got PBL standout Marlon Legaspi. Reynel Hugnatan (Coca-Cola) and Jimmy Alapag (Talk N' Text) completed the first round of the draft.

The Aces traded the No. 10 pick to the Phone Pals in exchange for swingman Don Camaso.

Teams have until Jan. 17 to sign up the rookies of their choice. Otherwise, the drafted rookies will automatically become free agents.

In another development, Air21-FedEx spruced up its roster after acquiring Marvin Ortiguerra and Omanzie Rodriguez from Sta. Lucia Realty. The Realtors offered nothing in exchange.

Rookies who were picked in the second round were NCAA MVP Sunday Salvacion (Ginebra), 1998 MBA MVP John Ferriols (FedEx), La Salle's Adonis Sta. Maria (Shell), UST's Cyrus Baguio (Red Bull), Fil-Am Eugene Tejada (Alaska), UE's Ronald Tubid (Shell), Ryzal Castro (Red Bull), Arnold Calo (San Miguel), 6-foot-9 Vincent San Diego (Red Bull) and Leo Bat-og (Alaska).

Selected rookies

Rounding up the list of selected rookies were Bruce Dacia (FedEx), Rob Johnson (Ginebra), Ralph Rivera (Shell), Jenkins Mesina (Purefoods), Ariel Capus (Sta. Lucia), William Kahi Villa (Talk N' Text), Dustin Coloso (Red Bull), George Chia (Coca-Cola), Stephen Padilla (Alaska), Kalani Ferreria (FedEx), Dennis Madrid (Shell), Jerry Jaca (Purefoods), Richard Hardine (Talk N' Text), Clarence Cole (Red Bull), Jeffrey Sanders (Coca-Cola), Sunny Margate (Alaska), Mike Bravo (FedEx), Joseph Dominguez (Purefoods), Ramil Ferma (Red Bull) and Sanley De Castro (Purefoods).



CORTEZ shows his Alaska jersey.

PHOTOS BY AUGUST DELA CRUZ



ADDUCUL to Ginebra.



LAURE to Shell.

Teams somehow overlooked some of the talents in the draft, which was by far the deepest and longest rookie event after it reached the seventh round. In the past, the rookie draft normally lasted until the fifth round.

Talented players such as point guard Edgar Echavez, UE's Leo Villar, Aldrich Kent Reyes, Christopher Corbin, shooter Rendell Dela Rea and power forwards Rodel Manuel and Melvin Taguines were totally forgotten as they remained in the applicants' tent throughout the

three-hour rookie spectacle.

Other aspirants who failed to get the nod of the teams were Abraham Pagtama, Mark Caguco, Dennis Morante, Raymund Soto, Edwin Pimentel, Michael Peteros, Carlos Sayon, Francis Rauschmayer, Tom Arceno, Leodito Yanogacio, Francis Oliver Machica, Rosauro Luis Salvador, Richmond De Los Cientos and Crispin Guintu.

A total of 40 rookies were chosen out of the 62 draft aspirants.

Nat'l Students cagefest set in Bicol

By Roy Luarca

BICOL will be the site of this year's National Students Basketball Championship from Feb. 23-March 1.

Basketball Association of the Philippines secretary general Graham Lim yesterday bared that the tournament, also known as the National inter-collegiate and inter-secondary basketball championships, will be held in the cities of Legaspi and Tabaco and the municipality of Ligao.

Albay Gov. Alfrancis Bichara has given his go-signal for the province's hosting of the tournament, which was coordinated by BAP Region V director Jun Lavadia and provincial director Henry Jacob.

All the country's regions are expected to be represented with the National Capital Region allotted two slots apart from that of defending inter-collegiate titlist St. Francis of Assisi.

The Metro Manila eliminations start on Jan. 17 at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum.

University of the Visayas copped the inter-secondary crown in last year's edition held in Roxas City and is also seeded.

This year's collegiate titlist will likely represent the country in the 4th Asian University Basketball Championship slated in Nanai City, China.

Mark nets 35 wins

GRANDMASTER-candidate Mark Paragua, the country's third highest-ranked player, netted a total of 35 wins and two draws out of 37 boards in his simultaneous exhibition matches Saturday in the opening of the Milo Checkmate clinic at St. Benedict College (SBC), Rizal Memorial Sports Complex (RMSC) and Greenhills Shopping Center (GSC).

His draws came from 13-year-old Aices Salvador of Manila and 18-year-old Joseph Repolito of Antipolo.

In the age-group competitions, 9-year-old Haridas Pascua of Pangasinan and 8-year-old Jan Nigel Galan of Valenzuela City ruled the junior and the 10-Under divisions, respectively, while Edjhen Escaño topped the 12-Under and Luzzel Dacayo won the 8-Under group.

The clinic is open to kids who are 5 years old and above. For details, call MCC at 826-8560, 0916-8521069 and 09189393702.

PLAYOFFS
Archers test Blades;
Blu confronts Dazz

GAMES TODAY (Pasig Sports Center)

3 p.m.—ICTSI-La Salle vs LBC
5 p.m.—Blu Detergent vs Dazz

By Dennis U. Erosa

ICTSI-La Salle starts its uphill climb to enter the semifinals using the backdoor as it tackles unpredictable LBC Batangas today in the PBL Challenge Cup at the Pasig Sports Center.

After topping Group B, the Green Archers now must beat the Blades twice in order to grab the fourth and final semifinals slot. If they hurdle Alex Compton and the Blades, next in line for the Archers are leaders Welcoat Paintmasters, topnotchers in the eliminations with a 9-2 win-loss record.

Welcoat also enjoys a twice-to-beat advantage against the fourth finisher in the crossover semis.

The ICTSI-LBC tiff is set at 3 p.m., followed by another equally exciting match between Blu Detergent and Dazz, which finished with identical 7-4 cards at the end of the eliminations.

The winner of the Blu-Dazz game will gain the second spot in the semifinals and the twice-to-beat privilege that goes with it. Both will meet in the crossover semis.

After an inconsistent start, the Archers have reverted back to their old, deadly form. Powered by Reynel Hugnatan, Bruce Dacia, Mark Cardona, Joseph Yeo and Adonis Sta. Maria, the Archers steamrolled the opposition in Group B. Milka Vainio and Rob Johnson are also contributing quality minutes.

Main problem for ICTSI is how to contain Compton, heart and soul of LBC, whose lack of ceiling has pulled it down the standings after a smashing start.

Battle of the Champions
table tennis meet Jan. 19

THE COUNTRY'S top paddle wielders strut their wares in the Battle of the Champions Invitational table tennis tournament on Jan. 19 at the Manila Polo Club in Forbes Park, Makati City.

National men's champion Ernesto Ebuon battles 1999 Brunei Southeast Asian Games bronze medalist Richard Gonzales in the featured men's singles while women's champion Sendrina Balatbat tackles Jade Jalloen in the distaff side.

In the boys' singles, 2002 LG Cup 17-under runner-up Don Paule meets 2001 Rustan's National Table Tennis Open winner Edward Ramos.

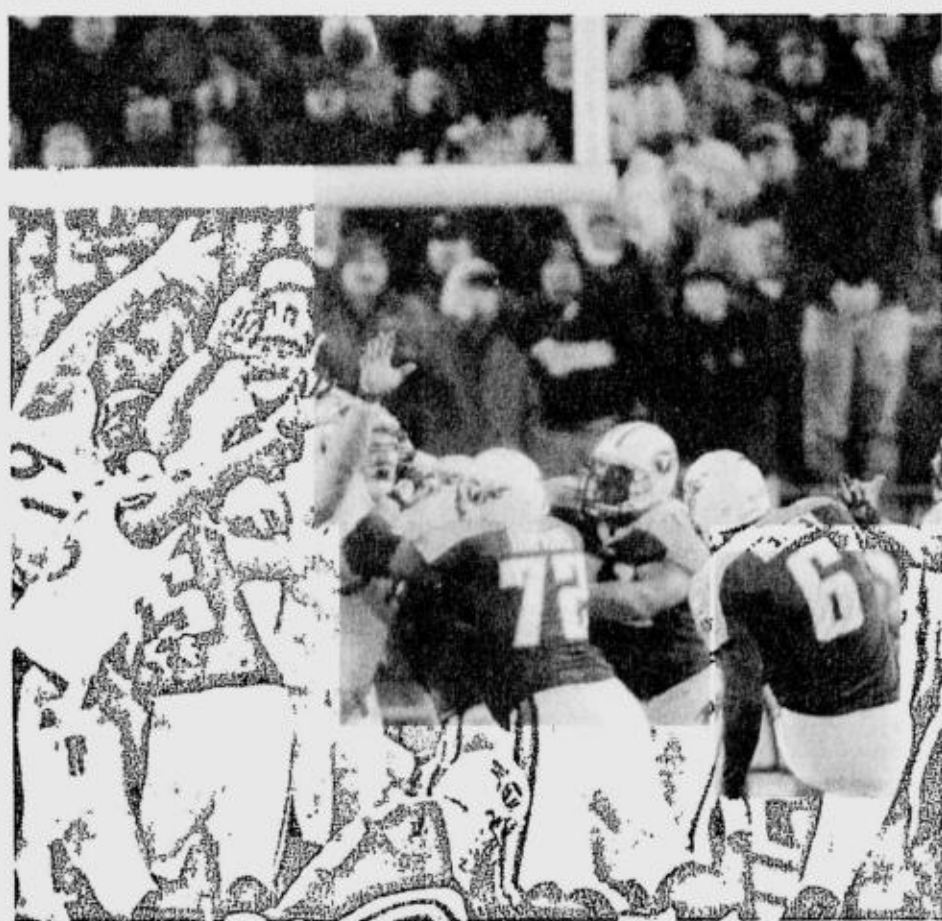
Ebuon and Jalloen will also play opposite Gonzales and Balatbat in the

mixed doubles of the event sponsored by FedEx and organized by Table Tennis Association of the Philippines (Tatap) public relations and events manager Robbie Pangilinan.

Meanwhile, Tatap recently launched its website—www.tatap.com—through the effort of the association's operations and IT chair Horacio Cadiz and Pangilinan.

By visiting the website, interested parties can get in touch with Tatap and other member associations through the provided directory.

The website features the latest news in the sport, local and international tournaments and the monthly calendar of activities of Tatap.



TENNESSEE Titans' Joe Nedney (6) kicks the game-winning field goal in overtime.

AFP

Falcons, Titans down rivals

PHILADELPHIA—The Atlanta Falcons had the better of the play but several key mistakes proved costly as the favored Philadelphia Eagles won 20-6 in Saturday's second NFL divisional playoff game to advance to the NFC championship.

Earlier, veteran kicker Joe Nedney split the uprights two minutes into overtime to give the Tennessee Titans a wild 34-31 win over the Pittsburgh Steelers.

The Eagles will play either the San Francisco 49ers or the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, two teams they have already beaten this season in next week's NFC Championship game.

The Titans will face the winner of Sunday's Oakland Raiders-New York Jets game for the AFC title and a place in the Super Bowl.

Philadelphia got its only offensive touchdown six and a half minutes from the end, when quarterback Donovan McNabb, making his first start in nearly two months after breaking his ankle, found a wide open James Thrash on a 35-yard pass-and-run play.

It came on fourth-and-one, and only after Eagles coach Andy Reid, just named the NFL's coach of the year, called time out to ponder the situation.

Reuters

MERCEDES TILT Els leads Korean by 2

By Doug Ferguson
AP Golf Writer

KAPALUA, Hawaii—One bad swing kept South African Ernie Els from a runaway Saturday in the Mercedes Championships. A record round by South Korea's K.J. Choi gave him a fighting chance.

Despite a double bogey on the 17th hole, Els shot an 8-under 65 in breezy conditions at Kapalua and took a two-stroke lead into the final round of the season-opening tournament.

Choi broke the Plantation Course record with an 11-under 62, although that didn't seem to do much good until a few lapses by Els at the end.

Els, known as the Big Easy, had a five-stroke lead when he was caught between clubs on the 17th tee. He opted for a 3-wood, tried to swing too hard and hooked it badly into the hazard, leading to his second double bogey of the tournament.

Choi made birdie on the 18th to break by one the record previously held by Mike Weir and David Duval. More importantly, it cut the deficit to two strokes. It stayed at that margin when Els missed a 5-foot (1.5-meter) birdie putt on the final hole.

It was the first time Els failed to make at least a birdie on a par 5, and it set the stage for what could be quite a duel at Kapalua.

Three years ago, Els went toe-to-toe with Tiger Woods in the final round, losing on the second hole of the playoff.

Even Woods, who is out for the first five weeks recovering from knee surgery, might not be able to hang with these two, who appear to be in midseason form.

Els was at 25-under 194, tying the PGA Tour's 54-hole record in relation to par. Gay Brewer also was 25 under through three rounds of the 1967 Pensacola Open.

Els and Choi will have a couple of other records within reach Sunday. The



ELS follows his shot from the second tee. AP

tournament record is 26-under 266, set by Duval in 1999. The PGA Tour record in relation to par is 28 under, set two years ago by Mark Calcavecchia in the Phoenix Open.

Better yet, no one else is in sight. Former U.S. Open champion Retief Goosen of South Africa had a 66, but was only at 201, seven strokes out of the lead.

Bob Estes (70), Chris Riley (67) and Jerry Kelly (67) were another stroke back.

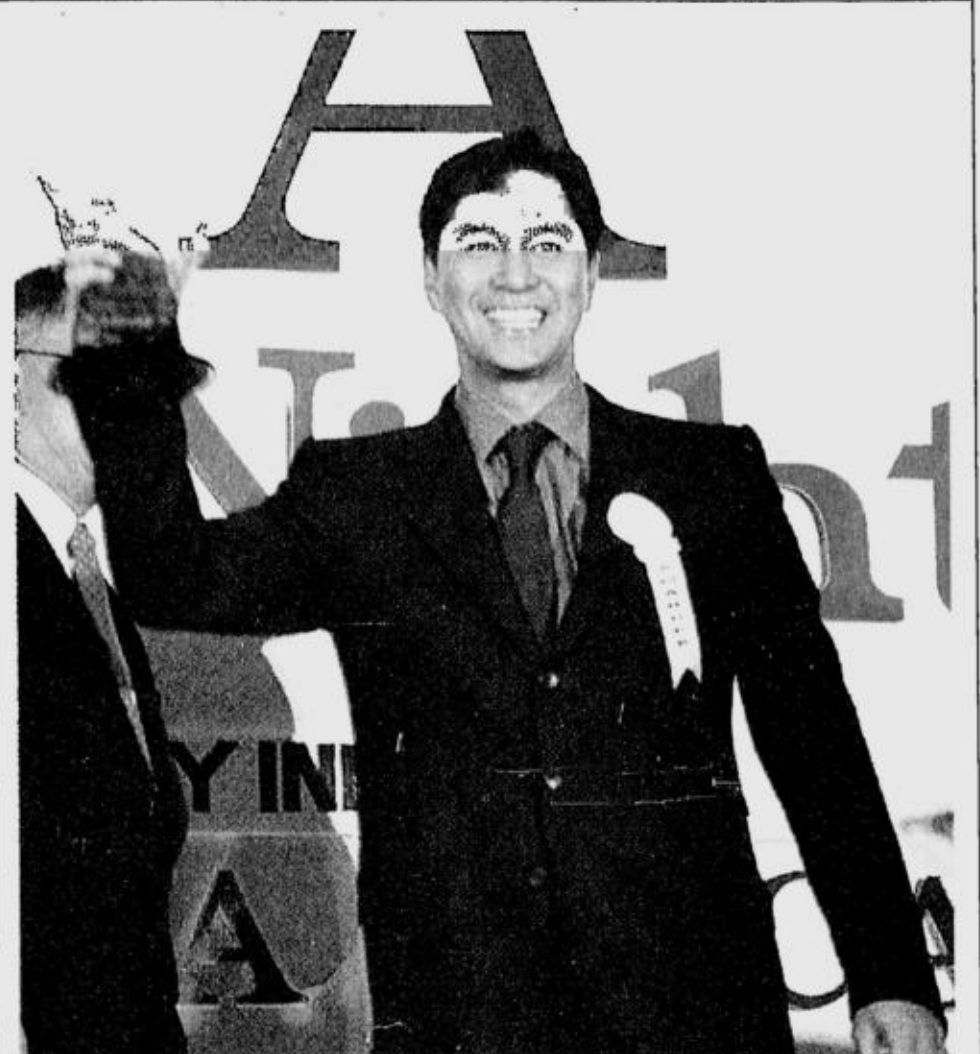
Choi would have been a long shot to win in his first trip to Kapalua except for Els' mistakes over the final two holes.

The big South African was crushing his driver to places rarely visited on the Plantation Course, giving himself plenty of looks at birdie and making most of his putts. AP

Third round scores:

194—Ernie Els 64 65 65
196—K.J. Choi 67 67 62
201—Retief Goosen 70 65 66
202—Jerry Kelly 65 70 67
67, Chris Riley 65 70 67,
Bob Estes 66 66 70
203—Jim Furyk 64 72 67
205—Loren Roberts 68 70 67,
Vijay Singh 68 70 67
206—Rocco Mediate 72 69 65,
Charles Howell III 73 66 67,
Gene Sauers 65 72 69,
Kevin Sutherland 71 66 69
207 Craig Perks 69 71 67, Phil
Tataurangi 68 70 69
208—Shigeki Maruyama 66 72 70,
Jonathan Byrd 68 69 71
209—Dan Forsman 69 71 69,
Luke Donald (Britain) 68 72 69,
Chris Smith 69 71 69,
J.P. Hayes 72 67 70,
Jeff Sluman 72 67 70
210—Sergio Garcia 71 73 66,
Justin Leonard 71 68 71
211—Craig Parry 71 69 71
212—Len Mattiace 75 68 69
213—John Rollins 72 72 69,
Matt Kuchar 70 70 73,
Nick Price 69 69 75
214—Chris DiMarco 70 75 69,
Jose Maria Olazabal 74 71 69
215—Rich Beem 74 71 70,
Ian Leggatt 69 67 79
216—Spike McRoy 72 71 73
217—Matt Gogel 69 75 73,
Bob Burns 71 72 74

Reuters



ALL SMILES

Sportsman-businessman Hermie Esguerra is all smiles after receiving the Horse of the Year award for his champion galloper Wind Blown during the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) Annual Awards Friday night at the Holiday Inn Manila. Wind Blown, the country's No. 1 galloper, won the prestigious award for the second straight year.

ROMY HOMILLADA

New venue for triathlon

THE 2003 National Triathlon Trial to be hosted by Cebu City for the first time has been moved to a new venue.

This materialized after the organizing Cebu City Sports Commission, headed by its chair Jonathan Guardo, and the Triathlon Association of the Philippines (TRAP) found a new site considering the problems of traffic and crowd control at the original venue at Mactan's Tambuli Resort.

The event will now be held at the P7-billion, 200-

hectare South Reclamation Project near Talisay, currently undergoing site development as part of Mayor Tommy Osmeña's latest economic zone project.

"I live near this area and it has been my dream to hold a big triathlon event here considering the conditions of the site and it will be completely traffic-free area for the triathletes, but it is only 10 to 15 minutes away from downtown Cebu," said Guardo of the new venue.

Match Play fires off today at Sta. Elena

PROMINENT sons of Xavier School will play for a cause in the second IBank-Xavier Match Play Tournament, a two-stage team competition which fires off today (Monday, Jan. 13) at the Sta. Elena Golf Club course in Cabuyao, Laguna.

The major sponsors are Heritage Park, Toyota Shaw, Hongkong Shanghai Bank, Deco Centrum, Discovery Spa, Eva Air, Goodyear Tires, Ben Line Agencies, Republic Powder-

coat, Stanwood, Fuji/G.E., PLDT, Pharaoh KTV.

Minor sponsors are Tan&Venturanza Law Offices, Akiga Restaurant, Four Arrows Marketing, Quik Snack, Burlington Socks, Steintek, Copper Trading, Popeye Chicken, Lee Jeans, Fuji-Haya, Oriental Tin, and other individuals who donated in a personal capacity.

The tournament with a format inspired by

the renowned Ryder Cup and the local Federation League is organized by the Xavier '72 Dragons to benefit the Xavier School Educational and Trust Fund, the PGH Indigent Patient Fund and Notre Dame de Vie.

Four teams—CK, Tiger, Stanwood 80s and Dragons—are seeing action in two rounds of competitive and fun-filled golf with the second half set to be played next Monday, Jan. 20, also at Sta. Elena.

Alabang's Mango Tee gets going Feb. 6-9

THE PRESTIGIOUS Mango Tee, one of the forerunners of the member-guest invitations in the local golf scene, will have its 19th edition on Feb. 6-9 at the Alabang Country Club with the competing roster formed as early as two months ago.

All 256 slots available have long been filled up, enabling the organizing committee headed by Rene Garovillo to focus on other concerns that would ensure the continued success of the Mango Tee.

Smart is coming in as the major sponsor for the fourth straight year, firming up an amazing relationship with the premier sports and lifestyle club which has gone as far as providing the communications needs for club operations. Smart's sponsorship is bolstered by Taylor Made adidas which will again reward tournament and raffle winners with its market-leading equipment, the Makati Skyline and Standard Chartered Bank.

Mitsubishi Motors will play its tradi-

tional role as donor of the hole-in-one prizes with the 2003 models, Lancer GLS 1600 and Adventure Grand Sport Diesel. Fedex, Turf Company, Pepsi Cola and Security Bank-Diners are making their presence in the premium holes.

"As in previous years, the 19th Mango Tee will all be the same four days of fun under the sun and friendly gathering that brings buddies and families back to what we consider our second home more than anything," said Garovillo.

With club president Farley Ampil, general manager Larry Jalbuena, golf committee chair Jun Galindez and the entire managerial workforce behind them, Garovillo's committee has set up everything in place for the big week.

The organizing committee also includes Babes Guilatco, Rolly Castro, Jimbo Ifigo and Caloy Coscolluela. Grand marshal is King Stehmeier.

They have been carefully screening handicaps ever since registration was closed as soon as it was opened.

Ucap 7-cock meet all set

IT'S all systems go for the 3rd Ucap 7-Cock Derby on Tuesday and Thursday (Jan. 14 and 16) at the Mandaluyong Coliseum.

Sponsors are Sagupaan Hammer Dewormer, Sagupaan Mite Free Shampoo and Washout Shampoo.

Cockfighting idol Patrick Antonio and engineer Sonny Lagon of Cebu are hosting the event. Submission of weights is today (Jan. 13), from 2 p. m. to 9 p. m.

For inquiries, interested parties may contact 531-4003, 531-

4005, 535-2341 and 534-4110. Last Saturday, three entries emerged as co-champions in the smashing successful "Ucap International 9-Cock Derby" hosted by OPMI president Vic Yu.

Co-champions were Jimmy Cody of Alabama, USA and newspaper publisher Butch Macasiet (RQP-RFP Greenwood Balbina Cody), lawyer Romero Yu, Joseph Chua and Danny Ty (JPC MW Ray Showdown) and Jun Marasigan of Batangas (JM Sa Pasay Jan. 31) who racked up seven points each.

Alinghi takes opener

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Rival America's Cup skippers Russell Coutts and Chris Dickson don't often agree, but they were unanimous on one point Sunday: Coutts' boat Alinghi got lucky in the first race of the challenger final.

Alinghi, maintaining its status as the class yacht of the competition, took an early lead on a fluky wind shift and easily won the opening race of the best-of-nine final over San Francisco's Oracle by 1 minute, 24 seconds.

"We got some nice breaks and 1-0 up is better than 1-0 down," said Coutts.

Oracle skipper Dickson was not disheartened by the loss, and praised Alinghi for its decision to tack right soon after the start while Oracle went left. AP



SAMSUNG TOUR CHAMPS

Winners of the recent Tagaytay Midlands leg of the Samsung Amateur Golf Tour are shown with event organizer Boy Blue Ocampo (extreme right) and TM golf director Loi Bernardino (extreme left). They are, second from left, Arlette Dizon (ladies Class B), Remijin Camping (ladies Class A), Oliver Gan (men's championship), Katy Katigbak (men's Class A), Tony dela Cruz (men's Class B) and Lerne Sagaya (men's Class C).

Fujikura

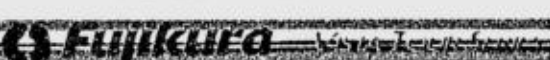
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AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Agassi opens bid today

MELBOURNE—Andre Agassi, bidding to become the first overseas male player to win four Australian Open titles, is in better shape than ever, his coach Darren Cahill said on Sunday.

The number two seed takes on fellow American Brian Vahaly in the first round in Melbourne today, and is fiercely determined to exorcise the demons of last year, when Agassi pulled out of the season-opening grand slam with a wrist injury.

"Last year was a long year and Andre was playing catch-up (after) the wrist injury. But his preparation for the Australian Open started the moment he lost in Shanghai," said Cahill, recalling the Tennis Masters Cup in November.

"He is fitter than I have ever seen him and probably faster around the court. He is incredible." The 32-year-old Agassi has already sent a warning to world number one Lleyton Hewitt, beating Frenchman Sebastien Grosjean 6-2, 6-3 to win the Kooyong Classic warm-up event on Saturday.

Cahill tipped Agassi and Hewitt to reach the final on Jan. 26 and predicted another

tight race for the year-ending number one spot in 2003.

"Andre and Lleyton are going to have a great year again. A final between number one and number two? It is a great story at his age and there is no end in sight for Andre," said Cahill, who used to coach Hewitt until he was fired at the end of 2001.

Agassi, who stepped up his already punishing training regime over Christmas in preparation for the Australian Open, won here in 1995 and then back-to-back in 2000 and 2001, the last time he tasted grand slam success.

"Andre peaked at the U.S. Open with that great match against (Pete) Sampras. He had a great year last year but no grand slam title. This time he feels ready," said Cahill.

Agassi will be desperate to end that particular drought and win an eighth grand slam singles title after losing to Sampras in the U.S. Open final.

All roads are likely to lead to Hewitt, but Agassi is not about to flinch, according to Cahill.

"He has found his game and he still believes he can be the best and finish at number one," he said.

Reuters

Melbourne netfest on Solar

SOLAR Entertainment Corporation begins its comprehensive telecast of the 2003 Australian Open, the first tennis grand slam of the year, with eight full hours of action today (Monday, Jan. 13) featuring the men's and women's singles opening matches.

For the next two weeks, Solar will telecast the Aussie Open daily, from 2 to 8 p.m., on Solar Sports (Channel 29 on Skycable and Homecable).

Three-time Australian Open champion Andre Agassi battles fellow American Brian Vahaly in one of the featured matches today. Top

seed and world No. 1 Lleyton Hewitt opens his campaign against Magnus Larsson of Sweden tomorrow. Hewitt will be vying for his first Australian Open championship. He faces a possible third round clash against former number one Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil.

Thailand's Paradorn Srichapan, who jumped more than 100 places in the rankings in 2002 and enters the tournament seeded 11th, goes against Austrian Jurgen Melzer.

The women's singles also gets underway today with world number one Serena Williams of the USA facing Emilie Loit of France.

Champs join NCA tourney

WORLD Slasher champions are taking part in the blockbuster NCA 7-Cock Derby today (Monday) and Wednesday at the Araneta Coliseum before another jam-packed crowd.

Hosted by the Firefly Group, Chito Bersamin, Rudy Albano, Rocky Molintas, Eugene Martin, Jun Velasco, Danny Mendoza, Tony Lasala, Edgar Santos and Ruel Ricafort, among the world champions competing are Big Dome owner Nene Araneta, boss Danding Cojuangco of San Miguel Corp., ageless James Chiongbin, former Tarlac Rep. Peping Cojuangco and Esting Teopaco, back-to-back Cocker of the Year Jun Santiago of the Firefly Group, Pampanga's Jun and Rudy Jingco, Dicky Lim, Eddie and Bomboy Araneta of Liza Galore Farms, Mario Villamor, William Co and Frank Berin of Mulawin fame. Also in the fold are Rudy Albano, Tos and Charlie Reyes of the famous Reyes clan, Boy Jiao, Alex and Gerry Escalona, the Madlambayan brothers, upcoming Louie Cua, Claude Bautista and Boyboy Roa, Gerry Ramos, John Capinpin, Edgar Santos and Ruel Ricafort.

Completing the cast are Visayan and Mindanao champions Johnny Jalandoni, Boy Velez, Eddie Boy Ledesma and Boy Nilo Lizares of Negros Occidental, Alex Tan of Cebu, and Mindanao's Boy Primallon and Arthur and Beboy Uy, Southern Tagalog will rely on Tony Lasala, Danny Mendoza and Romy Panganiban, while Northern Luzon will bank on Chito Bersamin, Eugene Martin and Rocky Molintas.

POC top brass urged to resign

ONE reason why sports is not making any progress nowadays is because of the presence of people like Philippine Olympic Committee secretary general Romeo Ribafio in the local sporting scene.

"Sports is in the wrong hands," said the unsinkable Col. Julian Malonso, outspoken former president of the POC.

Mr. Ribafio, who is also president of the squash association (on record one of the non-performing associations in the POC), has been recently denounced by many, including his peers in sports, for saying that the country's hosting of the 2005 Southeast Asian Games would be in peril after President Macapagal-Arroyo announced last Dec. 30 that she was not seeking the presidency in the 2004 elections.

POC president Celso Dayrit, Ribafio's staunch ally in the local Olympic body, chided his embattled sec-gen for making the premature statement, saying Ribafio could not be talking in behalf of the POC because as far as he was concerned, the preparations for the 2005 SEA Games are going on. Dayrit said Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, who heads the Philippine SEA Games Organizing Committee (Philsoc), has not hinted of any change, adding that "Secretary Romulo even told me that he is scheduling a meeting of Philsoc within this month."

Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhaln said Ribafio's statement put not only the President in a bad light but also the Philippines as well before the eyes of our Southeast Asian neighbors. "When the President announced her intention not to run in 2004, she said she wants to concentrate on solving the problems of confronting the nation, including our economy. And one way of doing this is to prove to

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prospective investor that the Philippines is one place where they can put their money safely. But how can we prove to them our capabilities, kung sa pagho-host lamang ng SEA Games eh hindi natin kaya? No, I don't think the President or the government itself will allow our image to be tarnished further."

Golf president Rod Feliciano said Ribafio's statement as "irresponsible" and has no place among decent men. He described it as "stupid."

POC chair and taekwondo chief Robert Aventajado said he was "very irritated" by Ribafio's statement, asking who is he (Ribafio) to make such a statement without consulting the POC executive committee? He stressed he would raise the issue during the executive committee meeting this week.

Former PSC commissioner and now Bacolod Rep. Monico Puenteveilla, chair of the House committee on youth and sports, said Ribafio's remark is "a fundamental mistake and an insult to us members of the Philippine Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee." The government representatives in the Philsoc, aside from Romulo, are Puenteveilla, Eric Buhaln and Secretaries Isidro Camacho of finance and Richard Gordon of tourism.

For his part, newly reelected tennis president Buddy Andrada not only blamed Ribafio for the fiasco, but also Dayrit for "a leadership without direction." They should resign if they truly love their country, Andrada's followers added.

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AWARDEES

Caltex-KTM-Revtext's Kenneth San Andres (right) and world 8-under golf champion Dottie Ardina display their awards during the Philippine Sportswriters Association Awards Friday night at the Holiday Inn where they were honored for their accomplishments. Ardina won the World Callaway Junior Golf Championship and the US Kids tournament while San Andres emerged champion of 11 of the 15 tournaments he participated in.

BLAST FROM THE PAST

TODAY in 1990, Frankie Milfoza fired a 2-under-par 70 to post a one-stroke victory over Eddie Bagtas in the 2nd Pilipinas Nissan golf classic at the Alabang course. Also today in 1990, Jamille Jose shot a 3-over-par 75 to win by four strokes in the 28th Lagerlitz-Philippines Ladies Golf Open at the Manila Golf and Country Club course.

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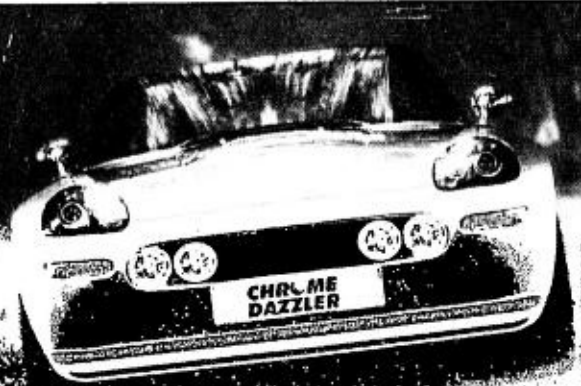
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Alaska trades Duremdes, picks Cortez

STORY ON PAGE A21

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O'Neal, Jordan sparkle as Pacers, Wizards win

INDIANAPOLIS—Jermaine O'Neal scored 23 points and had 12 rebounds and five blocks as the Indiana Pacers won their fourth straight game by downing the Golden State Warriors 116-104 in NBA action on Saturday.

Ron Artest also scored 23 points for Indiana (27-10), 21 of them in the first half, as the Pacers stayed in first place in the Central Division and moved into a tie with New Jersey for the best record in the Eastern Conference.

Reggie Miller chipped in with 21 points for the winners, while Brad Miller added 15 as the Pacers notched up their eighth win in the last 10 games.

Jamaal Tinsley scored nine points and had 14 assists. Antawn Jamison scored



JORDAN

33 points for the improving Warriors (15-21), who have lost just three of their past nine games.

Wizards 89, Knicks 84

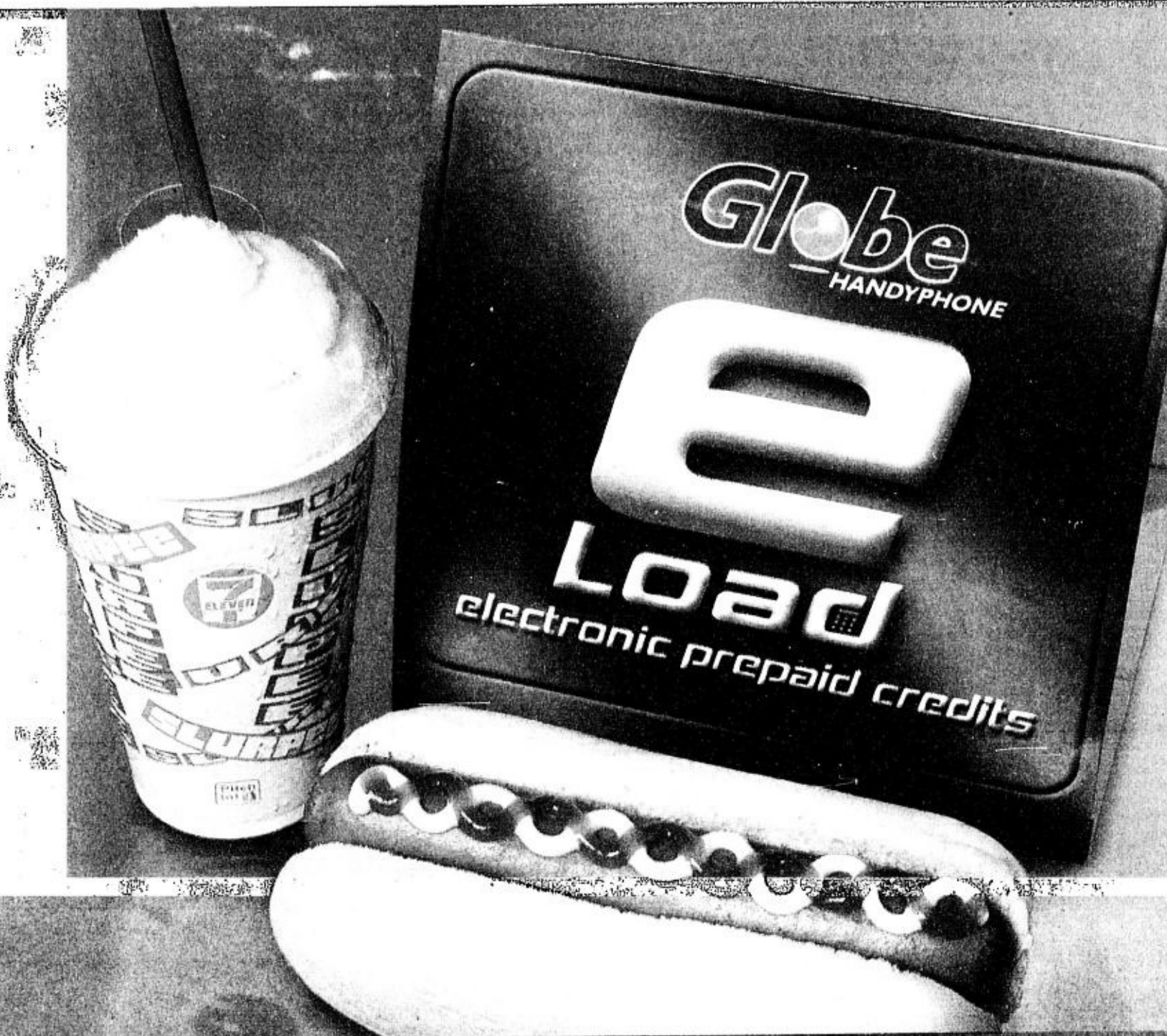
In New York, Michael Jordan scored 23 points and had 10 rebounds as the Washington Wizards beat the New York Knicks 89-84.

Jerry Stackhouse added 22 points for the Wizards (19-18), who have won six of their past seven games. Larry Hughes had 11 points and Christian Laettner had eight points and 11 rebounds.

COMPLETE RESULTS:

Atlanta 87, New Orleans 80; Indiana 116, Golden State 104; Milwaukee 89, Detroit 87; Washington 89, New York 84; Houston 87, Denver 85.

Reuters



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- The winner will be informed through registered mail and through call notification on his/her mobile phone if he/she won in the raffle draw. If the winner does not claim the prize within 14 days of winning call notification from Globe, registered mail from Globe Telecom will be sent, informing him/her that he/she has won.
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'Give up, then we forgive'

By Christian V. Esguerra

GRIEVING kin of the topnotch Ateneo law graduate who was gunned down by a burly gunman Friday sprang a surprise on lawmen who have yet to identify the killer.

Relatives of victim Jose Ramon Llamas, 26, said yesterday they're willing to forgive the killer—provided he surrenders and faces the charges.

"If you're a true Christian and Catholic, there's always room for forgiveness," Llamas' aunt, Edith Ruiz, 53, told the INQUIRER yesterday.

She added: "If Jay were still alive, we know he would also forgive the man."

Ruiz, who described Llamas as deeply religious and peace-loving, said the untimely death of the bar hopeful was anything but acceptable to his family.

Llamas was among the top 25 students of his batch and was gunning for the top 10 in the recent bar examinations.

He was also a consistent honor student and was accelerated during his undergraduate years. He was to have married his long-time girlfriend, Sid Castro, after the release of the bar examinations results.

Castro, the fiancée, was also a top-notch student and Llamas' classmate at Law school.

Promising as he was, Llamas was killed by an unknown gunman over a petty traffic altercation in Pasay City.

Ruiz said they could not believe the police's version of the incident that it was Llamas, allegedly fiery and arrogant, who bumped the killer's motorcycle.

"He's not like that," Ruiz said. "Everybody thought he would be the perfect lawyer. He was intelligent and hard-working. He never gave problems to anyone. He even played peacemaker to his friends and classmates."

More than 20 of Llamas' "brods" at the Aquila Legis Fraternity in Ateneo were among the first to rush to the crime scene, according to the aunt. They formed a human chain and encircled the area where their fallen frat brother lay lifeless. They also prayed and lighted candles at the Rizal Funeral Homes where the body was brought to.

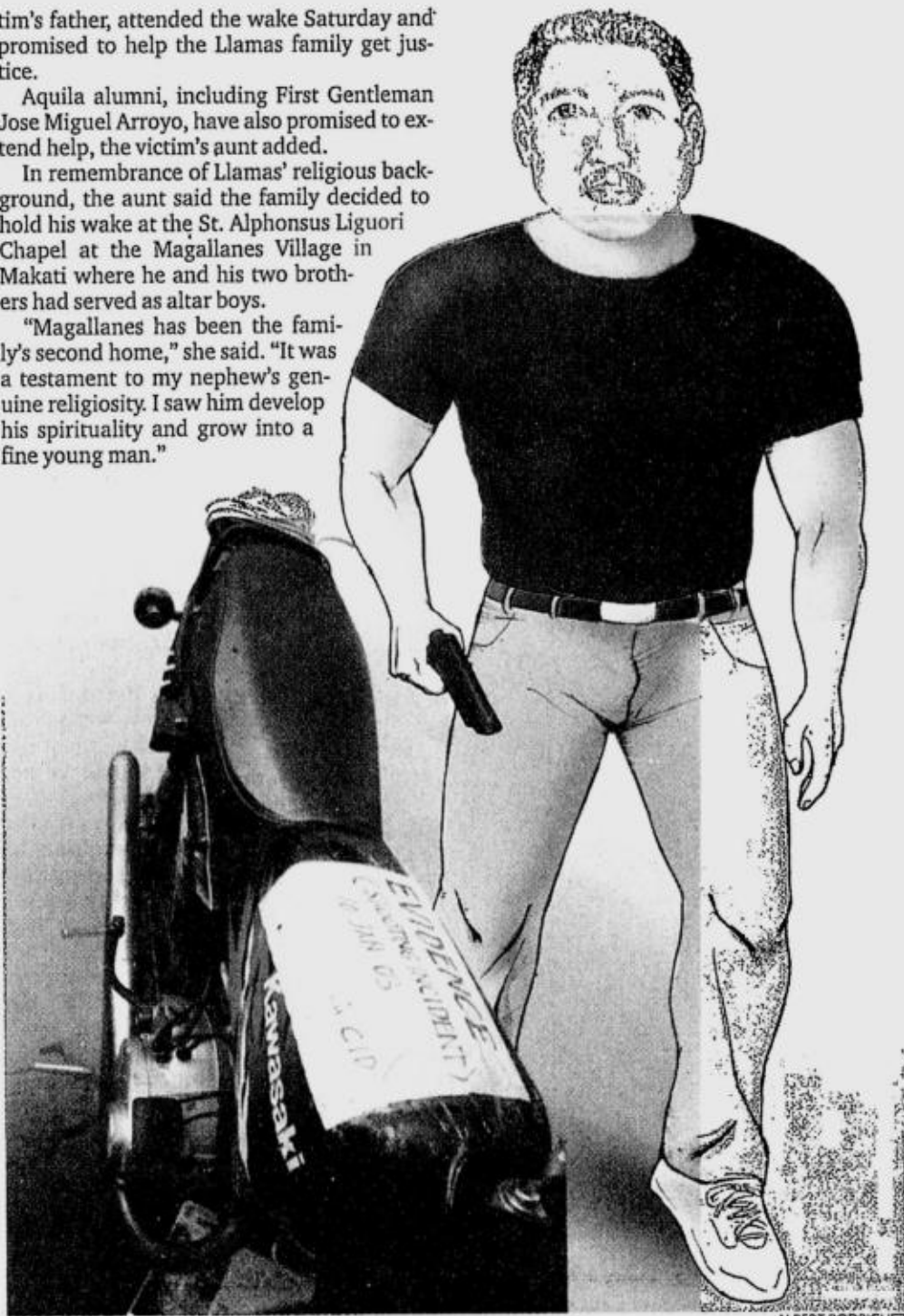
Former Sen. Raul Roco, cousin of the vic-

tim's father, attended the wake Saturday and promised to help the Llamas family get justice.

Aquila alumni, including First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, have also promised to extend help, the victim's aunt added.

In remembrance of Llamas' religious background, the aunt said the family decided to hold his wake at the St. Alphonsus Liguori Chapel at the Magallanes Village in Makati where he and his two brothers had served as altar boys.

"Magallanes has been the family's second home," she said. "It was a testament to my nephew's genuine religiosity. I saw him develop his spirituality and grow into a fine young man."



ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

Anybody can be a suspect

By Christian V. Esguerra

BOTH the police and public relied on speculations as the weekend stupor further stalled the investigation into the cold-blooded slay of an Ateneo law graduate in Pasay City on Friday.

The best the police could do yesterday was protect their ranks by brushing off theories that a cop could have killed Jose Ramon Llamas over a minor traffic feud.

"We don't know for sure who shot and killed him. Anybody can be a suspect at this point," Insp. Jose Mansalungan, deputy chief of the Pasay Criminal Investigation Division, told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Mansalungan said police were still consolidating the accounts of several witnesses to Llamas' killing near the corner of Taft and Gil Puyat avenues.

Witnesses said the killer was dark, stocky, and curly haired.

Some claimed the gunman had identified himself

as a policeman before he fled.

But others said the burly gunman made no such pronouncement, according to the police official.

Police said witnesses also gave conflicting statements on who had instigated the heated exchange that led to the shooting.

Some claimed Llamas, who was then driving a silver gray Toyota Corolla, accidentally hit the gunman's motorcycle. Others said it was the killer who had bumped the victim's car.

In any case, investigation was slowed by the usual weekend break, a Pasay officer admitted. "We couldn't check information with other government agencies because there was no office."

Mansalungan said only today would his men go to the Land Transportation Office to trace the registered owner of the gunman's motorcycle with license plate number VM 2047.

"We'll start from there," he said.

THE body and the gun (left figure) are imagined, but the artist's sketch of the killer is real, so is the motorbike he rode on.

SEN. Raul Roco (far left), a relative of the slain law graduate, views the Llamas remains with wife Sonia; while the victim's girlfriend, Sid Castro, grieves during the wake.

MANDY NAVASERO



They're closing in on Baron slay main suspects, Maganto claims

By Christian V. Esguerra

CHIEF Supt. Romeo Maganto claimed his men are closing in on main suspects Supt. Rafael Cardeño and Santiago "Sonny" Camacho, two days before the start of the Baron Cervantes murder trial.

Maganto yesterday said members of Task Force Cervantes were already surrounding an area in a peripheral province of Metro Manila where the two were last spotted.

"We know where they are...we're hoping to arrest them very soon," he told the INQUIRER.

Quoting intelligence assets, the police general said Cardeño and Camacho had decided



HUNTER Maganto

to stick together for better coordination while they're in hiding.

Cardeño was tagged as the brains behind the murder of Cervantes, a government informant and the self-styled spokesperson of the Young Officers' Union.

Camacho, said to be an ex-employee of the Land Transportation Officer, was the one who allegedly duped Cervantes into waiting in front of a Las Piñas drugstore where the govern-

ment informant was killed on New Year's Eve 2001.

According to Leonard de Vera, counsel to the Cervantes family, failure to catch

the two fugitives before Wednesday would result in a dragging and more complicated trial.

The three accused, currently under police custody, had all pointed to Cardeño as the mastermind and Camacho as a party to the crime.

But if the court would still have no jurisdiction over the fugitives when trial begins, the testimonies of Joseph Mostrales, Erlindo Torres, and Jaime Centeno would have no bearing against them, De Vera explained.

He said the accused would have to repeat their testimonies once Cardeño and Camacho are arraigned.

In a worst-case scenario, he expressed fear that the accused would have already recanted the sworn statements they had issued to police investigators by the time the fugitives were arrested.

De Vera said the accused indicated their likely recantation after they pleaded not guilty during the arraignment before a Las Piñas court more than two months ago.

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6 Manila policemen accused of extortion

By Philip C. Tubeza

SIX Manila policemen are in hot water for allegedly extorting P13,000 from a driver outside a church in Tondo, Manila.

Roman B. Petilon, 24, of Km 21, Mamuyod, Tublay in Benguet, yesterday filed a complaint against the six lawmen, all supposedly from the Sta. Cruz police station, said SPO4 Cecilio Saco-

rum, of the Western Police District-General Assignment Section.

Petilon is a driver of a trucking firm that plies the Baguio-Manila route, police said.

The suspects were not identified in the police report.

Petilon told police that the six suspects took P6,000 and a Nokia 3210 from him.

He said the suspects also took

P7,000 from a relative of his employer.

Police said the alleged extortion happened at 9:30 p.m. beside the Sto. Niño Church along Lakandula Street in Tondo.

Petilon told investigators the policemen accosted him and told him that they found shabu in his possession.

But he claimed the shabu was planted and said that instead of

taking him to the police station, the policemen took P6,000 and his Nokia cell phone.

Petilon said that the policemen still did not release him and demanded P7,000 from his employer.

He said he was only released after his employer's relative, Hyacinth Hilado, gave the money to the cops.

Police have set a confrontation between the two parties at 10 a.m. today at the WPD headquarters.

With a budget, Pacquiao behaves

BARE EYE



Recab Trinidad

You think a groom would skip his wedding because of a bum stomach?

A low blow, the PSA branded the Pacquiao misdeed in a pooled editorial.

Pacquiao might himself be slowly realizing what he had done.

Here: his non-appearance at the Holiday Inn Thursday was as bitter, unforgivable as the no-show of a groom during his own wedding.

No kidding. Everybody who

had something to do with the PSA felt both slurred and shamed.

Pacquiao merely bared that he did not have a high regard for the overworked reporters and deskmen who never tired in bringing to the public his exploits inside the ring.

There was a problem actually.

Unlike in his last title defense under Gov. Piñol in Davao, Pacquiao had no contract with the PSA.

If he did not show up in that Davao press conference, the promoters would've had the right to also hold on to part of his P8-million purse.

What's hard to believe is this rumor circulating around that Pacquiao had supposedly asked if there was no sum set aside for his appearance fee in the PSA grand ball.

Pacquiao was reportedly overheard as asking: "Me budget ba 'to?"

There was none, of course. There was also no contract.

What Pacquiao failed to realize was the magnitude and importance of the affair he had snubbed.

He should have shown up, if he had to come on a stretcher.

No budget, no contract.

But Pacquiao cannot also blame PSA bigwigs if they wish him to exit on a stretcher in one of his next fights.

He had just made many well-meaning people feel horrible as a bride who got stood up by the groom on the grandest of nights.

It was the second straight time Pacquiao had snubbed the annual PSA award rites

IN CASE you care, Manny Pacquiao could also honor commitments—if properly threatened.

Also, if there's a budget.

The reigning IBF super bantamweight champion had to jump out of his hotel bed to rush and make himself present during the press conference for his title defense in Davao last October.

Pacquiao actually had no plans of gracing the affair.

But when his handlers received a warning call, from Gov. Manny Piñol of North Cotabato, that Pacquiao had to be in the conference as stipulated in the fight contract, the world champ behaved himself.

Well, there was nobody to threaten and remind Pacquiao of the consequences after he snubbed the Philippine Sportswriters Association which had prepared a grand ball to honor him as its Sportsman of the Year on Friday.

So the boxing celebrity, allegedly weakened by a bum stomach, spent his own sweet time in bed as the local sports world waited—in vain.

Look, if it were the first time Pacquiao had done it, the PSA would have taken the slight with a grain of salt.

It was however already the second straight time Pacquiao had absented himself from the annual award rites honoring the country's top athletes.

Last year, he simply said he had to take care of his child in General Santos City, so he coolly skipped the PSA night which had honored him as its top professional boxer.

Truth was Pacquiao thought he felt he had been done an injustice after he was not bestowed the highest honor by the PSA last year.

Well, for this year's slur, Pacquiao had reportedly offered his apologies to Bert Cuevas, the PSA president.

But, based on succeeding reactions, the flimsy excuse won't wash.

It was not a mere snub.

Pacquiao had actually jilted the national sportswriting fraternity, which had prepared one of its grandest balls in history.

Atienza names his price for Arroceros Forest Park

By Jerome Aning

TREES or teachers.

This was the tough choice for Manila Mayor Lito Atienza when he planned to construct a building for the city's teachers in the Arroceros Forest Park.

Now, the mayor has named his price—about P300 million—for the 2.1 hectare forest amid solid opposition from environmentalists, who claim that constructing a building on the park would destroy the trees.

In a press conference on Friday, Atienza showed his exasperation and asked the affluent members of Winner Foundation, which maintains the park and hopes to transform it into a tropical jungle, to "buy the forest park or swap it with one of their lots in Manila so they can do anything they want with it."

The city bought the park for P65 million from the Land Bank of the Philippines in 1993 using the city government's special education plan.

This has been Atienza's argument for wanting to construct a teachers' building on the park: The property was bought with public teachers' money so it is only fair that the teachers benefit from it.

The building would house the city's education department, seminar rooms, a library and teachers' dormitories.

But construction of the build-



A STUDENT helps maintain Arroceros Park as part of his civic duty

ing means the felling of centuries-old trees and disturbing the natural habitat of some birds and wild life that had sought shelter in the park, according to environmentalists.

Winner Foundation president Regina Rocas-Paterno said last week that construction could not be allowed on the park, which is not yet fully open to the public, because about 3,500 trees planted in the forest would be endangered.

She explained that the development of the forest involves various stages that could take as long as 20 years.

The mayor "does not know a thing about forestry," Paterno said.

"You cannot create a forest overnight, but we are accelerating access to it by partially opening it to public," she said.

The forest is currently on the secondary planting stage, she said.

This is when shrubs and smaller vegetation will be planted on the forest floor to protect the land from being

eroded by the Pasig River, Paterno added.

She suggested that the teacher's building be constructed on the site of a row of edifices south of the park which City Hall is planning to redevelop.

But Atienza rejected this, saying the row of buildings, which include the Manila Barangay Bureau and the local elections offices, will be used for other purposes.

The Winner scheme has been approved by the University of the Philippines-Los Baños forestry department, she said.

"As guardians of this forest, Winner will do its duty in taking care of the trees until 2013," Paterno vowed.

Atienza countered that if Winner really wants to create a real tropical jungle, "then the New People's Army should be called in to set up a lair there to complete the scene."

He said that even with the building, the park could still be developed into a recreation area.

Paterno said the park could still serve an educational purpose even if it remains a park.

Through field trips and special tours, students and the public would learn the park's value to the environment, Paterno said.

Instead of going to the provinces, the city's Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts could also use the park as a campsite, she said.

QC fire victims suspect sabotage

By Agnes E. Donato

A VICTIM in the Quezon City fire that left about 1,000 families homeless last week appealed to the government yesterday to find a proper shelter for them immediately.

Mike Bismar, who lost his home in a squatter community in Cubao, Quezon City, also raised suspicions that the fire was a result of sabotage.

He said that he and other victims believe that the fire was started by people who would benefit if the squatter community were removed in the area.

Bismar said their suspicion arose from the fact that the electric transformer, which exploded and supposedly triggered the fire, blew up five minutes after a man supposedly employed by the Manila Electric Co. went up the electrical post to fix the transformer. But minutes after the man went down the post, the transformer blew up, Bismar said.

Two fire trucks arrived at the scene minutes after the blaze started, but the trucks had no water and were only blocking the way of the other fire trucks, he said.

Bismar said that last Saturday night, two truckloads of policemen arrived in the area to completely demolish the structures that were left standing.

But the victims, who were beginning to rebuild their shanties, stopped the policemen from destroying the remaining structures, Bismar said.

The fire victims were initially relocated to the Eulogio Rodriguez Elementary School, but they could only stay there until Tuesday.

'Put out the fire'

By Tina Santos

MORE than 30,000 families have appealed to the Metro Manila Development Authority, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and other concerned agencies to help them put out the fire that continuously to burn on a dumpsite in the boundary of Valenzuela and Bulacan.

The dumpsite is between Barangay Lingunan in Bulacan and Barangay Veinte Reales in Valenzuela.

The residents said that most of them, particularly the children, have been struck with asthma, pneumonia, colds and flu because of the thick smoke coming from the fire which has been burning for almost a week now.

The residents also complained of the foul smell coming from the garbage.

"We can hardly breathe," said Marilyn Aragon, a mother of three and a resident of Barangay Veinte Reales in Valenzuela. "We might even die of suffocation."

"Our local government officials seem to be ignoring us," said Romeo Biglang-awa, 43, a factory worker.

But a source from the local fire bureau said firemen have already tried to extinguish the fire several times, but it still continues to burn.

"We are having a hard time putting out the fire because of strong winds," said a Valenzuela firefighter, who refused to be named said.

Manila councilor wants to ban sale of GMO products in the city

By Jerome Aning

A MANILA councilor wants the city government to make a stand on genetic engineering by banning the sale of food products made of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the city.

Councilor Elizabeth Rivera's proposal also prohibits the transportation and storage of GMOs within the city.

The bill, which has been passed by the Council during first reading, is expected to draw debate among scientists, farmers' groups and ethicists.

"There are well-founded fears that humans may not be prepared to consume these GMOs," Rivera explained.

The 6th district alderman said that it has not been established whether or not GMOs are safe for human consumption.

"It is most prudent that an ordinance be passed to protect public health without us having to wait for the findings on whether GMOs have beneficial or ill effects (to the body)," she said.

Rivera's proposal also wants violators of the ban to be punished with a six-day imprisonment, a P3,000 fine, or both, if the court decides.

The proposed ordinance is being studied by the committees on

laws, science and technology, and health.

Rivera observed that scientists are in a frenzy to study and master the techniques of genetic engineering, particularly the cloning of plants, animals and even humans.

She said that many people in the scientific field think that cloning or tinkering with genes might be the answer to the problem of fast-dwindling food resources in the planet.

She added that experts have already produced pest resisting, longer lasting and more productive crops.

"American genetic engineers have already developed tomatoes that turn red easily and take a longer time to rot," Rivera said.

Recently, the government has also tried to test corn plants that have been genetically modified to resist pest.

But Rivera's bill also provides the automatic lifting of the ban on GMOs once the Bureau of Food and Drugs certifies that GMOs are universally fit for human consumption.

Products that contain GMOs include snack foods, cereals, and animal feeds.

Even in technologically advanced countries, debate on health issues in connection with the use of GMOs is still raging.



JOAN BONDOL

CALALAY, 63

Quezon City Rep. Reynaldo Calalay passed away on Saturday night after a cardiac arrest. The lawmaker had diabetes and high-blood pressure and had been in hospital since Dec. 24 last year, said his daughter Cathy. Calalay is the second member of the House to pass away in the present 12th Congress after the death last year of Cavite Rep. Napoleon Verardo. Calalay's remains lie in state at the San Pedro Bautista Church Sanctuario in San Francisco Del Monte, Quezon City. His family has yet to decide on an interment date. Calalay was on his last term as representative of the first district of Quezon City. Cathy is beside her father's coffin during a quiet moment at the wake.

Christine Avendaño

More than 1,000 Manila cops fielded for Fourth World Meeting of Families

By Jerome Aning

THE WESTERN Police District will field 1,545 members of the Manila police force to ensure peace and order in the city during the Fourth World Meeting of Families activities late this month.

WPD spokesman Jerry Agunod said these include plainclothes detectives, intelligence personnel, security escorts and traffic policemen.

There will be policemen stationed in the vicinity of the Quirino Grandstand and the Philippine International Convention Center, where the activities will be held.

Policemen will also be assigned in hotels where the delegates of the world will be billeted during their stay.

Agunod said the WPD is waiting for the final list of delegates and their itineraries from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Church authorities so the police department could make the necessary security arrangements.

People, Events & Products

Aries Espinosa, Editor

aespinosa@inquirer.com.ph

Petrosaver and the environment

IT IS the development, distribution and advancement of distinctive products and services that uphold a genuine ecological concern to the populace and effects a thorough enhancement and betterment of everyday living that Eco-Tech envisions.

Petrosaver's technology is designed to meet the management of air quality and pollution control as a support method on the current approach from dumping waste engine oil, sewage and pollutant brought about by emissions coming from vehicles, vessels and factories.

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Petrosaver's engine oil refiner decreases oil change and extends engine usage of up to 158,000 km and eliminates the effect of combustion gases and the effect of engine blow by.

Most importantly, Eco-Tech is participating and assisting the communities in the effort to uplift and improve prevailing environment concerns, reaching out to promote public relations, social awareness and involvement.

For inquiries visit Eco-Tech International Trading Inc. at Unit-B 32nd floor, Rufino Pacific Tower-6784, Ayala Avenue Makati City. Tel nos: 811-0000, 811-3449-50 / Fax: 811-1139.



55TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR

Former President Fidel V. Ramos greets the Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Antonio Franco with Myanmar Ambassador U Tin Thun and Philippine Myanmar Business Council chair Jose P. Leviste Jr. during the celebration of the 55th anniversary of the founding of the Union of Myanmar at the Intercontinental Hotel.



TOP PBL PLAYERS ENDORSE DUCKS

Top PBL players Jon Dan Salvador, Billy Mamaril, Unik Reyes and Sunday Salvacion have recently expressed their backing for Ducks Unlimited during a visit of the popular fashion marker at level 2 of Glorietta 3, Ayala Center Makati. They were accompanied by publicist Ayo Gunting. 'Ducks is confidence', Jon Dan said. Ducks has branches at Robinsons Ermita and Galleria, SM Cubao, Shoppesville Greenhills, Ali Mall Cubao and Century Park Sheraton Hotel.



BARBIE'S LITTLE RAPUNZELS

Barbie's annual Christmas party was a success with this year's theme of Barbie as Rapunzel. The Glorietta Activity Center was turned into Barbie's magical courtyard last Dec. 8. Lots of games and pocket events were prepared. The afternoon highlight was the Barbie as Rapunzel Look-A-Like Contest with about 30 little girls dressed up like Rapunzel. Cassandra Miller was adjudged as the best among the contestants. The Barbie as Rapunzel Christmas party and the rest of the Barbie as Rapunzel Holiday Specials was brought by Citibank, Pillsbury, Goldilocks,

Jack n' Jill Roller Coaster and Chiz Curls, Kiddi Pharamton, David's Salon, Clover Chips & Cheezy by Leslies, Chips Delight & Egg Bites, Kameraworld, Hair Link, Candyman makers of Viva Caramel, White Rabbit, Kendi Mint and Blast Menthol Candies, Home Radio, SM Supermalls, Dreamzone, and Fort Bonifacio Development Corporation. Barbie as Rapunzel doll collection, licensed apparel and accessories are now available in all leading toy stores and department stores nationwide. Exclusively distributed by Richwell Trading Corp., #25 Quezon Ave., QC.

Gantimpala Theater offers weekly Saturday workshops

GIVE a lasting gift that will change character, improve personality and discover one's creativity – a gift certificate for the Gantimpala Theater Foundation's Weekly Saturday workshops.

In cooperation with the National Parks Development Committee, Gantimpala Theater – which is celebrating its 25th Silver Anniversary is offering weekly Saturday workshops at its new office at the open-air auditorium, Rizal Park, Manila. Workshops offered are Children's Theater – open to children 5 to 12 years old that will encourage theater games, working as a team and inhibition from shyness. The Children Theater workshops began last Jan. 11 and ends March 29 with sessions from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Basic acting is also being offered every Saturday beginning Jan. 11 until March 29 with sessions from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. This weekly workshops is open to teenagers as well as adults with or without theater experience and will focus on the elements of acting as well as eight basis efforts. Another course for those interested in the the-

ater but prefer to be backstage rather than on-stage and still be a part of the creative team is the production skills workshop. This workshops offer production management on Jan. 11 and 18; stage management on Jan. 25 and Feb. 11; props making on Feb. 8 and 15; scene design on Feb. 22 and March 1; costume design on March 8 and 15 and lights design on March 22 and 29. All classes at 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

A gift certificate of P500 each entitles your recipient to attend one workshop sessions. A total of P5,000 cash payment or gift certificates entitles the bearer to attend full workshop sessions of 12 meetings, thus getting a discount of P1,000.

Give a lasting gift – give a gift of art – give the Gantimpala Theater Foundation gift certificate.

For more information, call the GTF office at 528-0603 / 0918-921-2866 or email them at gantimpala@pacific.net.ph The gift certificates are available at the CCP Bookshop and at selected Country Waffles outlets.

Remulla head jurors for Ms and Mr CEU 2003

INSPIRED by the performance of Centro Escolar University students and alumni in various national beauty and personality competitions, Centro Escolar University will hold the Ms and Mr CEU 2003 final pageant and coronation night tonight, 6:30 p.m. at the CEU North Quadrangle. 20 candidates will vie for the title of Ms and Mr CEU. The search carries this year's theme "Exemplifying Beauty, Truth and Goodness."

This year's board of judges is headed by Gilbert Cesar Remulla, Representative of the 2nd district of Cavite. Other judges include Standard Insurance president and CEU vice chair of the board Ernesto T. Echaz; CEU executive vice president Dr. Maria L. Ayuyao; fashion designers Frederick Peralta, Edwin Tan, Eddie Baddeo; fashion director Ariel Lozada and fashion photographer Dominique James. Also part of the board of judges will be Binibining Pilipinas title holders, Bb. Pilipinas World 2002 Katherine Anne Manalo, Bb. Pilipinas International 2002 Katherine Alazar, Bb. Pilipinas Universe Karen Loren Agustin, Bb. Pilipinas International 2001 Maricarl Tolosa and Model of the World Gemith Gemparo.

Ms and Mr CEU is an annual search for campus models of excellence, emphasizing good values among its contestants. The search aims to develop and strengthens qualities and traits that a model CEU student should exemplify, promote well-roundness among CEU students, 'prepare intelligent, talented and gifted students to excel in global competitiveness and provide effective means of determining models for excellence within the university.

The event is a project of the CEU Student Affairs Office, under the leadership of the CEU AVP for Student Affairs Dr. Claire Z. Manalo.



BLUE CROSS HEALTH REFERENCE MANUAL LAUNCHED

Ms Jackie Lou Blanco poses with Blue Cross chief executive officer Anthony J. Medcalf during the unveiling of the Blue Cross Health Reference Manual at the Blue Cross Health Week in Megamall.

Product FILES

Carlo's Pizza at Tomas Morato

NOW Metro Manilans can enjoy the flavor of authentic Italian cuisine and the cozy feel of an Italian pizzeria as Carlo's Pizza opens its Tomas Morato branch (374-6090).

Aside from its famous pizza, Carlo's has a wide variety of delectable dishes to feast on such as calzone, cannelloni, bolognese pasta, fettuccini Alfredo and complete meals like steak and pasta/rice and chicken and pasta/rice.

Carlo's other branch is at Mile High Center, Camp John Hay (446-1387) and the soon-to-open outlet at SM Pines Center also in Baguio.



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Moondish Bicol Express comes in Tuna Flakes and in Vegetarian Style variants. Moondish Ready-To-Eat Bicol Express is already available in major supermarkets and grocery stores in GMA and selected provinces. Interested customers and distributors may contact Moonbake Inc. at tel. nos. 801-8320 or 802-8301.



TRAINING FOR TRAINERS COURSE

The Sulo Hotel recently lauded its graduates for the 'Training for Trainers Course' for the year 2002. The training for this batch was conducted for almost two months, which included theoretical and practical sessions for which trainees were required to submit 4 session plans as Post Course requirements to complete the course. Skills gained in the program by the graduates committed to achieve the goal, lead well-trained staff, and uphold the hotel's philosophy of delivering excellent customer service. Photo shows, standing

from left (graduates): Capt. Ricardo Ogas, 1st cook Ernesto Ramos, chief steward Roy Galzote, Capt. Fidelito Javier, Capt. Lyn Saspa, bartender Arthur Montague Jr., MIS officer Ricky Marfil, chef de partie Joseph Famadico, housekeeping supervisor Rolando Olpindo and house officer Rey Balones. Seated from left: HR manager Noel Santos, executive chef Peter Caramat, F&B manager Ruben Alcoriza, assistant to the president Nena Roque, rooms division manager Ali Makabenta and cost controller Milo Hernandez.

ENTERTAINMENT

Ricky Reyes cries after watching TV-bio on his life

IT TOOK a lot of convincing for noted hairdresser and philanthropist Ricky Reyes to finally relent and have his life story dramatized on TV. Although he already came out with his biography, with a book written by Abe Florendo, Reyes was adamant about giving his nod to a teleplay about his life.

Unknown perhaps to many, Reyes' life is the stuff melodramas are made of. His rags-to-riches story is colorful, interesting and dramatic. He never denies that his growing up years were punctuated by hardships and tears, but Reyes persevered and worked hard, so that he rose to become a successful business entrepreneur.

This is the reason GMA 7 production executives Wilma Galvante, Marivin Arayata and Redgie Magno urged Reyes to recount the highlights of his life for tonight's teleplay in the weekly drama anthology, "Magpakailanman," hosted by Mel Tiangco (9 to 10:30 p.m.).

Still, it was not easy getting the go-signal from Reyes. The noted hairdresser was initially hesitant to expose his life story on nationwide TV because he wanted to stay low-key.

"But the bosses at GMA 7 explained to me that my story can inspire not just gay hairdressers who are dear to my heart, but also Filipinos, to continue to strive hard," Reyes says.

The award-winning Jun Lana, whose film credits include "Jose Rizal" and "Muro-Ami," was tapped to write the teleplay for Reyes' TV-bio. At the helm of the episode is Argel Joseph.

Reyes made it a point to visit the location and watch the taping. In one scene which shows lead star Janno Gibbs being beaten up by his older brother for being gay, Reyes couldn't help but shed tears.

"Bigla na lang akong naiyak after I saw that," Reyes recalls. "I remember what I had to go through when I was young."

SHOWBIZ
TIDBITSLeah
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Meanwhile, getting an actor to play a true-to-life gay role also became a challenge for the GMA 7 executives.

When Janno Gibbs was eyed for the part, the singer-actor was not totally receptive to the offer. Although he has done cross-dressing in many of his movies in the past, Janno has nixed several projects that would require him to play a gay role.

"I don't have anything against gays, but I'm not really comfortable emoting a faggot role," Janno maintains. "I don't mind wearing women's clothes for gimmickry or to make a certain scene funny, as long as my character is a man."

Just the same, Janno asked for the script of the teleplay to be delivered to him. It didn't take him long to give GMA 7's program unit manager Redgie Magno a call and tell her he is willing to do the role.

Janno intimated he was touched by Reyes' life story so that it became a challenge to him how to play a real-life gay character on TV.

"Mother Ricky is very lovable and respectable," says Janno of the beauty expert. "He is not the typical shrieking faggot, a role I always refuse to do. Mother Ricky's life story projects family values and his long, hard climb to fame and success. It is very heartwarming and inspiring."

Reyes' life story will air in "Magpakailanman" at 9 tonight on GMA 7.

Starring with Janno are Gina Pareño as Mama Amada, Pen Medina as Ricardo Reyes Sr. and young actor Juan Miguel "JM" de Guzman as Reyes' younger brother Totoy.

Even if Reyes is now a multi-millionaire with a chain of more than 40 salons all over the country, he sticks to what he loves best—and that is haircutting. Reyes, whose name has become synonymous to beauty, continues to work in his salons. During the week, he does the rounds of his beauty parlors in Metro Manila. On Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, he gives personalized services to his loyal clients (by appointment only) at the One-on-One Salon in Greenhills, San Juan.

His agonizing experiences and hardships in life prodded Reyes to share his blessings to others. To date, he acts as benefactor to many charitable institutions like home for the aged, association of senior citizens, home for street children and the Philippine General Hospital cancer ward for children called "Munting Paraiso."

Reyes always finds time to visit the sick children at Munting Paraiso, a special haven for cancer patients which he helped put-up four years ago inside the Cancer Institute of PGH.

Last month, Reyes distributed gifts, medical supplies, foods and toys at Munting Paraiso, with presidential daughter Luli Arroyo and Mandaluyong Mayor Benhur Abalos.

The annual "Pasko sa Munting Paraiso" project is initiated with the officers and members of Fil-Hair Coop., an association of hairdressers and salon owners nationwide headed by Reyes.

Reyes is also the prime mover of the project "Isang Gunting Isang Suklay," founder of Fil-Hair Co-Op and host of 12-time PMPC Star Awards for TV awardee for best educational and lifestyle program, "Beauty Plus" (RPN 9).

Barbers against VAT
on celebrities

SENATOR Robert Z. Barbers strongly criticized the Bureau of

Internal Revenue (BIR) on its plan to charge show biz personalities and celebrities 10 percent Value Added Tax (VAT) to be deducted from their annual gross income.

Barbers said that if the BIR and other income generating agencies were not able to attain their targeted collections for the year 2002, show biz personalities and celebrities should not be made to suffer for such inability and used by the BIR so they can improve their tax collection.

"These personalities are earnestly paying what they ought to pay to the government for their entertainment jobs," said Barbers in a statement. "It would seem unjust for them to pay additional taxes when what needs to be badly improved is the BIR's resolve to go after big time tax evaders."

Barbers said he will study and work for the possible amendment of the existing law mandating the 10 percent VAT for celebrities and other professionals, the implementation of which has been suspended.

In the meantime, the lawmakers said show biz personalities can ask the Department of Finance if it can possibly withhold anew its implementation.

The Mindanao solon noted that if the BIR wants to improve their tax collection this year and attain their target revenues, the bureau must intensify their campaign in running against tax evaders and smugglers who owe the government billions of pesos. The money could be used by the government to fund much needed social services and infrastructure projects.

The former Interior and Local Government Secretary likewise stressed that another concern the BIR should look into are the reported illegal transactions, syndicated operations and anomalies happening within its jurisdiction.



REAL AND REEL. Ricky Reyes (left) is portrayed in the TV-bio by singer-actor Janno Gibbs.



THE PHILANTHROPIST. Ricky Reyes with presidential daughter Luli Arroyo distributing gifts to cancer patients at the Philippine General Hospital.

British movie outfit produces film ...



ENSEMBLE PIECE. The cast with director Milke Cassey.

From page A29

For España, "Intermates" is not just a gay movie. "Aside from presenting a clear picture of how gay people live, the film also tells a story of how people cope with failed relationships and the loss of a loved-one," he explained. "Things like these can happen to straight people, too."

Twenty minutes into the movie, one will forget that it's about gay people, attests McLeod. "It's a warm human drama," he notes.

When España auditioned for the film, he said the first thing director McLeod asked him was if he could stand kissing another man.

"I have no qualms about my love scenes," Espano said. "In fact, I was more concerned about whether the other actors could endure the scene or not."

"But the love scenes were not at all sleazy. They weren't something that the censors would want to cut," he added.

Espano essayed the role of Rocky in Atlantis Productions' highly successful musical, "Rocky Horror Picture Show," staged last November at the RCBC Theater in Makati.

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Steven Seagal back in Action

International action superstar Steven Seagal is back with a vengeance. This time he plays undercover FBI agent Sascha Petrovitch in the brand-new non-stop, slam-bang action blockbuster from Columbia Pictures, "Half Past Dead."

The California Penal Authority has reopened Alcatraz, the most notorious prison in history. A disgruntled prison bureaucrat-turned-criminal mastermind heads a renegade commando team to infiltrate the high-tech fortress in order to force a death-row inmate to reveal the whereabouts of \$200 million worth of gold.

Seagal teams with rap artist Ja Rule to rally the Alcatraz inmates to stop the invaders - before they murder the Supreme Court Justice, who is in The Rock to witness an execution.

The fast-paced, action-packed thriller also stars sexy Filipino Hollywood actress Nia Peeples as a deadly gun-firing, knife-throwing martial artist.

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New materials

McLeod, who has been living in the country for 12 years now, said "Intermates" is only one of many movies Tojaro plans to make about the Philippines.

"This is only the first of many. We are continuously looking for new materials to produce," he said. "But our next move would really depend on how the movie would fare in Brussels."

McLeod wrote several books ("Coral Reefs of the Philippines" and "Filipino Myths and Legends"), documentaries ("Corregidor," "Bataan Death March" and "The Battle of Leyte") and had helped write the screenplay of Raymond Red's Cannes-winning short film, "Anino," which starred Eddie Garcia, Ronnie Lazaro and John Arcilla.

Erecc, meanwhile, has just inked a contract with an American production outfit for his other work titled "Indak," a story he wrote in memory of a group of young people who died during the 1995 Ozone tragedy.



GOLLUM. The CGI worldly creature more profound and expressive in feeling than most actors.

A poem pure in art...

From page A32

time, filled with humor and sadness, excitement and the sheer joy of cinematic storytelling. They are films that deserve to be seen on a big screen, films that cannot help but touch viewers of all ages.

"Return of the King" will most likely be just as wonderful and moving, and the three films will exude greatness in one sweeping gust of magic.

Phenomenon

Twenty years from now, when the trilogy is spruced up (by what kind of better technology who knows?) and rerun in theaters to celebrate its anniversary, people will perhaps remember where they were and who they were when they first saw the "L.O.T.R." films. They'd be telling their children or grandchildren about it, about how they saw the movies on the big screen (then again, maybe every home would have a big screen in twenty years), and how movies don't get any better.

Perhaps again the question then would be not which film in the trilogy is the best (or which is better than what) but how the "L.O.T.R." films have become a phenomenon that people want to rekindle and share with their own family. Is it because of the story, propelled by heart and imagination, and advocating the uncorrupted values of our childhood?

Good and evil are never more so clearly delineated than in "Towers" where frail, imperfect human beings have to rise above themselves to do battle against the forces of the Dark Lord Sauron and Saruman, who want to wipe them off the face of Middle Earth.

Temptation

Power in the film as well as in "Fellowship" is a constant temptation to one's evil side. The One Ring can only do bad, even in the hands of a good person. Saruman himself was a wise wizard before surrendering to the lure of absolute power in "Fellowship."

Gollum, we are told, was the Hobbit Smeagol before possession of The Ring ruined him. And in "Towers" we also see The Ring

slowly corrupting the clean-cut innocence of Frodo of The Shire.

Even the dialogue can lay the "good vs. evil theme" on us with a shovel, as when Frodo tells Sam, "There is good in the world and it is worth fighting for." Or when Treebeard the Ent tries to waft more than a little eco-friendliness into the heart of popular sentiment.

Moments like these may seem unmanageably mawkish, yet "Towers" strikes one with a directness and force that hardly anybody nowadays ever associates with sentimentality. Sure we know we are being manipulated, but we don't care, because the treatment works.

Go ahead, we tell Peter Jackson: it's our pleasure.

Camaraderie

So even if we've seen love doomed from the start in countless films, Arwen and Aragorn's love still inspires genuine sorrow and hope. Even if the themes of friendship and family already seem ordinary, the bond and camaraderie of the Fellowship (though broken) still rings true.

Even if we've had our share of beautifully filmed landscapes, we still see a certain life affirming patina carefully etched in the fine cinematography of "Towers."

But you know, maybe the question people would really be asking twenty years from now is, how could Gollum not have won best actor for his performance in the film? The CGI character whose movements and facial expressions were animated from actor Andy Serkis' performance (he also did Gollum's eerie voice) is truly a marvel. The struggle between Gollum and Smeagol is paradox personified.

The geniuses at WETA Digital and Serkis should be congratulated for bringing to life an otherworldly creature more profound and expressive in feeling than most actors. By the reaction of the audience in the screening I attended, Gollum could very well be the true star of "Towers."

Serkis and Gollum call for new categories in the film industries' award-giving bodies, and maybe in the not-too-distant future, such categories would indeed be created.

British movie outfit produces film on Filipino gay lifestyle

By Marinel R. Cruz

GAY flicks like Robin Williams' "The Bird Cage," Dean Cain's "The Broken Hearts Club" or Kevin Kline's "In and Out" have given us a glimpse of how members of the third sex live their lives in a world that has very little tolerance for their kind.

The local movie industry also has its share of films that discuss the often-criticized gay lifestyle, the most sensational of late was "Markova: Comfort Gay," that featured comedy king Dolphy and his two sons Eric and Jeffrey.

The movie had been a huge success in film festivals abroad. At the Brussels International Film Festival in 2001, the three stars were even awarded both the best actor and best actress trophies.

International release

Now comes another film about the Filipino gay lifestyle that was made right under our noses. It is now on its way to Brussels to bid as an entry to the Belgium film fest in February.

The movie also aims to be included in other film festivals in California, New York, Berlin in Germany and Cannes in France. But the movie will not be shown locally, according to its British producers-directors Ham McLeod and Mike Cassey.

"Intermates," a movie created by the British movie outfit Tojaro Productions, was filmed entirely in the Philippines and boasts an all-Filipino cast.

Written in 1999 by Filipino scriptwriter Dinno Erece for the then Film Development Board of the Philippines, "Intermates" tells of the lives of ten gay men all connected by circumstance or acquaintance through the Internet.

The film revolves around Ian Veneracion's character Starman, a famous action star who keeps his homosexuality from the public to preserve his image as a heartthrob.

The story is a two-hour flashback on the dual life that Veneracion's character has led before he died in a car crash.



BREAKING STEREOTYPES. (from left) Jay España, Simon Ibarra and Jojo Alejar.

PHOTOS BY DENNIS SABANGAN

Nine other actors complete the cast. They are Jojo Alejar, Raymond Bagatsing, Mike Lloren, Jay España, Simon Ibarra, Miggy Moreno, Jo Mari Jose, William Thio and Rommel Go.

"Each of us are connected to Starman in one way or another," said Alejar, who plays the jilted lover Hopeless. "But basically, this is because we're all chatters in the Internet."

Not just a gay movie

Alejar plucked himself out of years of relative inactivity in show biz and decided to face the cameras once again. He said he found auditioning for the role of Hopeless exciting.

"Staging auditions is something local producers and filmmakers should adapt," Alejar said. "Lately, most of our movies are tailor-made for certain actors, never mind if he is not really fit for it."

España plays Alejar's medical student lover Medman, who leaves him for Starman.

BRITISH/A28



MCLEOD. "Intermates is a warm human drama."

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CELEBRITY CALENDARS

Star Studio Magazine recently launched its celebrity calendars for 2003. The Body Calendar features sexy actresses Angela Velez and Andrea del Rosario (above), with Michelle Bayle in revealing poses, as photographed by Jim Paredes and Tom Epperson. Also available is Star Studio's Power Boys calendar, which features Greg Martin, Geoff Rodriguez, Jordan Herrera, Jay Salas and Frank Garcia, photographed by Raymund Isaac and Ronnie Salvacion.

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THE PODIUM CINEMA

1840 Avenue Circle Corner Westinghouse LRT

833-8940 LORD OF THE RINGS: The Two Towers
11:30 FS/12:00 MF/3:40/7:20/
10:30 LFS/11:00 LMF/2:10 END

LORD OF THE RINGS: The Two Towers
10:50 FS/11:20 MF/3:00/6:40/
9:50 LFS/10:20 LMF/1:30 END

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Galleria 632-9115-16 633-7641 loc. 279 LORD OF THE RINGS II - 11:00 AM (MF); 2:30 PM; 6:00 PM; 9:30 PM (LMF) 2 LORD OF THE RINGS II 3 HALF PAST DEAD 4 RING (JAPANESE VERSION) 5 LORD OF THE RINGS II 6 LORD OF THE RINGS II 7 SPIRIT WARRIORS 8 MANO PO 9 DEKADA '70 10 LASTIKMAN MATINEE PRICE: P80 THX cinema / P65 11th & 12th cinema Mon. - Fri. / 10am - 4pm (EXCEPT HOLIDAYS)	Ermita 536-7809-12 1 LORD OF THE RINGS II 2 MANO PO 3 LASTIKMAN 4 RING (JAPANESE VERSION) 5 HALF PAST DEAD 6 LORD OF THE RINGS II 7 LORD OF THE RINGS II	Metro East - Marcos Hwy 682-8193 / 8280 1 LASTIKMAN 2 LORD OF THE RINGS II 3 LORD OF THE RINGS II 4 DEKADA '70 5 HALF PAST DEAD 6 LORD OF THE RINGS II 7 LORD OF THE RINGS II 8 MANO PO	Novaliches 935-3229 - 30 1 LORD OF THE RINGS II 2 LORD OF THE RINGS II 3 DEKADA '70 4 LASTIKMAN 5 HALF PAST DEAD 6 LORD OF THE RINGS II 7 MANO PO 8 SPIRIT WARRIORS	Malabon Cincque 288-0985 / 288-2575 1 LORD OF THE RINGS II 2 LORD OF THE RINGS II 3 HALF PAST DEAD 4 LASTIKMAN/KERIDA	Star Mills - St. Fernando, Pamp. 875-1927 961-5318 / 5270 1 HALF PAST DEAD 2 MANO PO 3 SPIRIT WARRIORS 4 LASTIKMAN 5 LORD OF THE RINGS II 6 LORD OF THE RINGS II	Imus 471-8168 / 875-3838 1 LORD OF THE RINGS II 2 LORD OF THE RINGS II 3 SPIRIT WARRIORS 4 HALF PAST DEAD 5 LASTIKMAN 6 KERIDA	Sta. Rosa Laguna 336-8077 - 78 1 HULA MO HULI KO 2 LASTIKMAN 3 SWIMFAN 4 SPIRIT WARRIORS 5 REPLI-KATE 6 MANO PO	Bacolod 441-0453 / 0459 1 HOME ALONG THE RIBER 2 VAMPS 3 MANO PO 4 DEKADA '70 5 SPIRIT WARRIORS 6 LASTIKMAN	Iloilo 336-8077 - 78 1 HULA MO HULI KO 2 LASTIKMAN 3 SWIMFAN 4 SPIRIT WARRIORS 5 REPLI-KATE 6 MANO PO
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MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

When breaking news explodes on TV

AT AROUND 8:04 a.m. last Dec. 30, we were channel-surfing for interesting tidbits on the morning TV shows when we caught a really important item on Channel 2's "Magandang Umaga, Bayan": A field reporter in Baguio was informing studio anchor Aljo Bendijo that President Gloria Arroyo had just surprised her audience there by declaring that she had decided not to run for president in the 2004 polls.

Instead of asking for more details, however, Bendijo merely thanked the field reporter and moved on to the next report. We stared at the TV screen, dumbfounded.

Next, we switched to Channel 7, to see how soon it would get wind of the breaking news scooped by its main competitor. Alas, the hosts on "Unang Hirit" were talking about different kinds of firecrackers and other incendiary devices for the New Year, seemingly oblivious to the president's all-important decision not to run in the next polls, and instead to concentrate on good government, with fewer political considerations and restraints.

They talked on and on about *paputok*, not knowing that a hot news event had just "exploded" in Baguio, and on Channel 2!

After many minutes, we surfed the other channels again, and found the ANC News channel on top of the story. Then, back on Channel 2, the president was already being interviewed on audio from Baguio, and she confirmed her decision not to run. Meanwhile, unless we missed a breaking news announcement, on Channel 7, still nothing.

Later on ANC, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel was

VIEWFINDER



Nestor U. Torre

The networks will be judged by how well they handle news and scoops

already being interviewed for his reaction to the president's act of "political sacrifice." Even later, ANC interviewed other people for their take on the announcement. One of them recalled that president's father had also said he wouldn't run, but later changed his mind and ran against Ferdinand Marcos.

We don't know at what point Channel 7 got on top of the story, but the ABS-CBN channels appear to have got to it first. Too bad, Channel 2 didn't consolidate its gains early, because Aljo Bendijo didn't follow up on the breaking news quickly enough.

On TV, breaking news and scoops can be a matter of seconds, not minutes, and it is in how well they instantly handle such unexpected developments of national importance that our channels' respective news departments will be judged—not just by viewers, but also by their peers in the increasingly more demanding field of broadcast journalism.

John Lesaca at Calesa Bar

VIOLINIST John Lesaca performs on Jan. 24 at the Hyatt's Calesa Music Bar and Lounge. The special show is part of the ongoing series of tributes to Calesa's entertainment director and resident pianist, Rudy Francisco, on his 35th year with Hyatt Regency Manila, culminating this March.

'Shining Stars'

FOR the second year in a row, 500 kids from different children's organizations participated recently in "Shining Stars," a soup kitchen

manned by celebrities at the NBC Tent. Mascots, musicians and storytellers entertained the children, along with modules created by Museo Pambata.

Also present were MTV and Penshoppe Youth Council members Uriah Van der Bos, Brad Turvey, Nicole Schulze and Terrence Koa. "Shining Stars" was created by Keren Pascual, Joji Dingcong, Aga Nukid, Maurice Arcache and E.J. Litton to give underprivileged children a treat

during the Christmas holidays.

Feedback

DANTON Rivero of Sta. Mesa, Manila called to react to the series of articles about GMA-7's move to 'topple' ABS-CBN-2 from its top perch in broadcasting. He said the media play-up was too strong. He suggests to GMA that, instead of being so hard-sell, it should "just do good," and let the positive effect of that win more viewers over to its side.

SUSMARYOSEP... THE ORIGINAL IS BACK!

DUE TO INSISTENT DEMAND BY THE HORRIFIED PUBLIC... THE ORIGINAL JAPANESE FILM THAT STARTED THE "FEAR FEVER" IN METRO MANILA IS NOW ON ITS RETURN ENGAGEMENT AT SM MEGAMALL SM MANILA SM NORT GLORIETTA-4 GREENBELT ROBINSON GALLERIA ROBINSON ERMITA

Experience Fear Worse Than Nightmare!!!

Ring
Circle of Evil

"There's a video. If you see it you have to show it to someone else. After seven days... you die!"

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HALF PAST DEAD P13 1:10, 3:20, 5:30, 7:40, 9:50	LORD OF THE RINGS "TWO TOWERS" GP 11:30, 3:10, 6:50, 10:30	LORD OF THE RINGS "TWO TOWERS" GP 1:50, 5:30, 9:10
LORD OF THE RINGS "TWO TOWERS" GP 12:30, 4:10, 7:50	LORD OF THE RINGS "TWO TOWERS" GP 1:10, 4:30	LORD OF THE RINGS "TWO TOWERS" GP 10:50, 2:30

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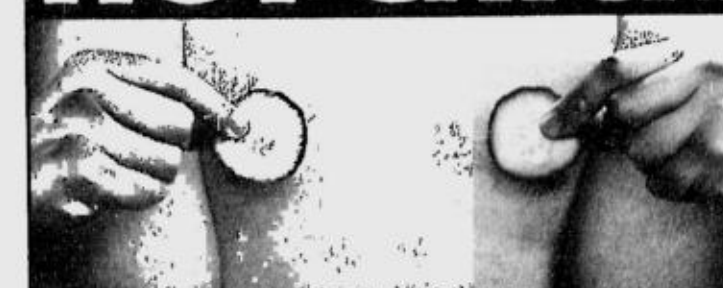
SNEAK PREVIEWS TODAY!
BE THE FIRST TO SEE THE HOTTEST COMEDY IN TOWN!

MTRCB RATING PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult

FIRST, HE BECAME A GIGOLO.
ON JANUARY 22 HE'S BECOMING A WOMAN.



ROB SCHNEIDER IS THE HOT CHICK



Distributed by Buena Vista International thru Columbia Pictures

Araneta Center ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

ALI MALL CINEPLEX 7

Ali 1	LASTIKMAN
Ali 2	DEKADA '70
Ali 3	HALF PAST DEAD
Ali 4	LORD OF THE RINGS 2
Ali 5	LORD OF THE RINGS 2
Ali 6	THE HOT CHICK
Ali 7	MANO PO

FARMERS PLAZA CINEMAS

Farmers 1	HALF PAST DEAD
Farmers 2	LORD OF THE RINGS 2

ARANETA COLISEUM

JAN 13 & 15	NCA 7 COCK DERBY
JAN 21, 22, & 24	WORLD SLASHER CUP 2003
FEB 15	ABBA TRIBUTE

ELEPHANT WORLD

JAN. 15	3 PM
JAN. 16	10 AM / 3 PM
JAN. 17	10 AM / 3 PM / 5 PM

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA

EASTERN	CLOSED
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	MASARAP NA PUGAD / SEX LOVE
ODEON	HALF PAST DEAD
ODEON-2	PAMASAK BUTAS / EVANGELINE 14
ROBEN	KERIDA
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	RAIN OF FIRE / THE TOUCH

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET-2	LASTIKMAN
QUEZON-1	KERIDA
REMAR	HALF PAST DEAD
REMAR-2	KERIDA

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	LORD OF THE RINGS 2
B	HULA MO, HULI KO
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	HALF PAST DEAD
CINEMA-2	LORD OF THE RINGS 2

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST (681-6481 TO 19)	
CINEMA-1	DEKADA '70
CINEMA-2	KERIDA
CINEMA-3	SPIRIT WARRIORS 2
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LORD OF THE RINGS 2
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	DIE ANOTHER DAY
CINEMA-6	AGIMAT
CINEMA-7	SHADOLIN SOCCER
CINEMA-8	LASTIKMAN
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 2
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LORD OF THE RINGS 2
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	HALF PAST DEAD
CINEMA-12	LORD OF THE RINGS 2
CINEMA-14	MANO PO
CINEMA-15	LASTIKMAN

LORES

CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN

CINEMA 1	DIE ANOTHER DAY
CINEMA 2	BAHID
CINEMA 3	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA 4	CHANGING LIVES

UNIWIIDE COASTAL MALL

(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDI

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MTRCB RATING: P 13

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ROB SCHNEIDER IS THE HOT CHICK

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Parents are strongly cautioned not to bring children below 13 years old to watch this movie.

"THE BEST SCARY MOVIE SINCE 'THE SIXTH SENSE'... 'THE RING' WILL HAUNT YOU."

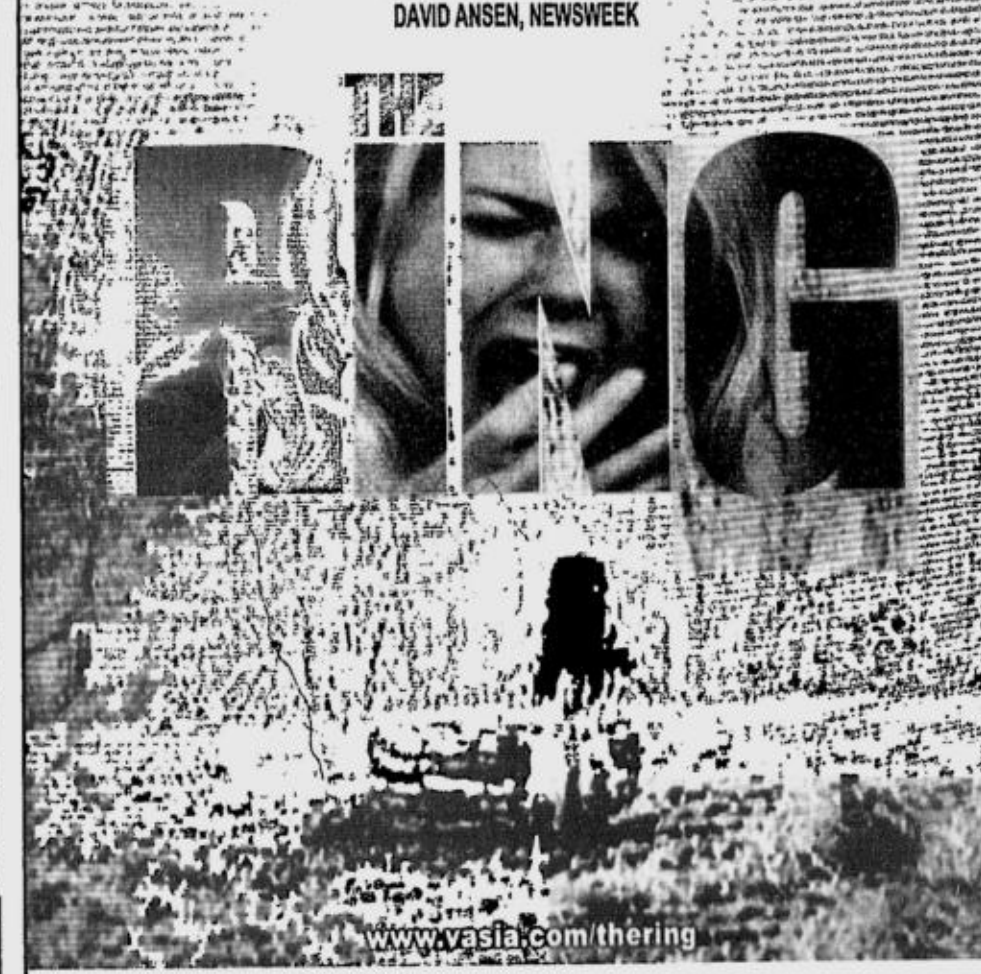
SUSAN GRANGER, SSG SYNDICATE

"NOT SINCE 'THE EXORCIST' OR 'ROSEMARY'S BABY' HAS A MOVIE BEEN SO TRULY FRIGHTENING."

PAT COLLINS, WWOR

"THE RING' RAISES SOME SERIOUS GOOSE BUMPS."

DAVID ANSEN, NEWSWEEK



REGULAR SHOWING ON JANUARY 17
SNEAK PREVIEWS ON JANUARY 15 & 16

MAKIKILALA MO NA SILA!

Dalawang babaeng palaban sa kagandahan at katapangan.



Daniela

Ang super gandang bida na maagang mauulila sa ina. At dahil may ibang pamilya na ang kanyang ama, mapipilitan siyang makisama sa matapobre niyang madrasta. Paano niya haharapin ang bukas sa kabila ng lahat?

PREMIERES TODAY
at 11:30 AM

Altagracia

Ang herederang binansagang "Babae ni Hudas". Napagbintangang pumatay ng isang pari at nakulong ng dalawampung taon. Sa kanyang paglaya, magbabayad na kaya ang tunay na may sala?

PREMIERES TODAY
after MTB



ABS-CBN

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Louie C. Camino



"GOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR." Hobbit Frodo Baggins of The Shire (Elijah Wood, left) tells Sam Wise (Sean Astin).

'THE TWO TOWERS'

A poem pure in art, not just in sentiment

By Ruben M. Cruz Jr.
Contributor

what "The Two Towers" is all about, what it means.

THE BIG question for many J.R.R. Tolkien's fans has always been how do you follow up a triumph like "The Fellowship of the Ring"? That film, Peter Jackson's first installment on "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy, was a popular and critical success (with 13 Oscar nominations). It was so good it made converts of even non-Tolkien readers.

Could the sequel be any better? After "Fellowship" the new "L.O.T.R." film, "The Two Towers," certainly qualifies as an event, but the vibe this time was unusually heightened.

The film arrived in theaters with more anticipation surrounding it than most sure blockbusters. You could feel it. The people lining up outside the theater weren't just there to see a movie. They had made a pilgrimage.

Even without bombarding them with various ads (which of course the film company, New Line Cinema, did anyway), they knew

Dazzled

I watched the film in a trance, dazzled and moved and transported. And now I believe asking whether it is better than "Fellowship" is not the big question, maybe, not even a right one to ask.

A film critic (I forgot who) once said that all the best movies are poems.

"Fellowship" is one poem and "Towers" is another. Both are beautiful poems, two films that are pure in art and not just in sentiment.

Because of them, one can only look forward to the third part of the trilogy ("Return of the King") with the same shivers of anticipation and desperation.

The "L.O.T.R." film trilogy could turn out to be one of the most prized possessions of any video collection. One could already regard "Fellowship" and "Towers" as modern classics—two of the great film experiences of all

A POEM/A29

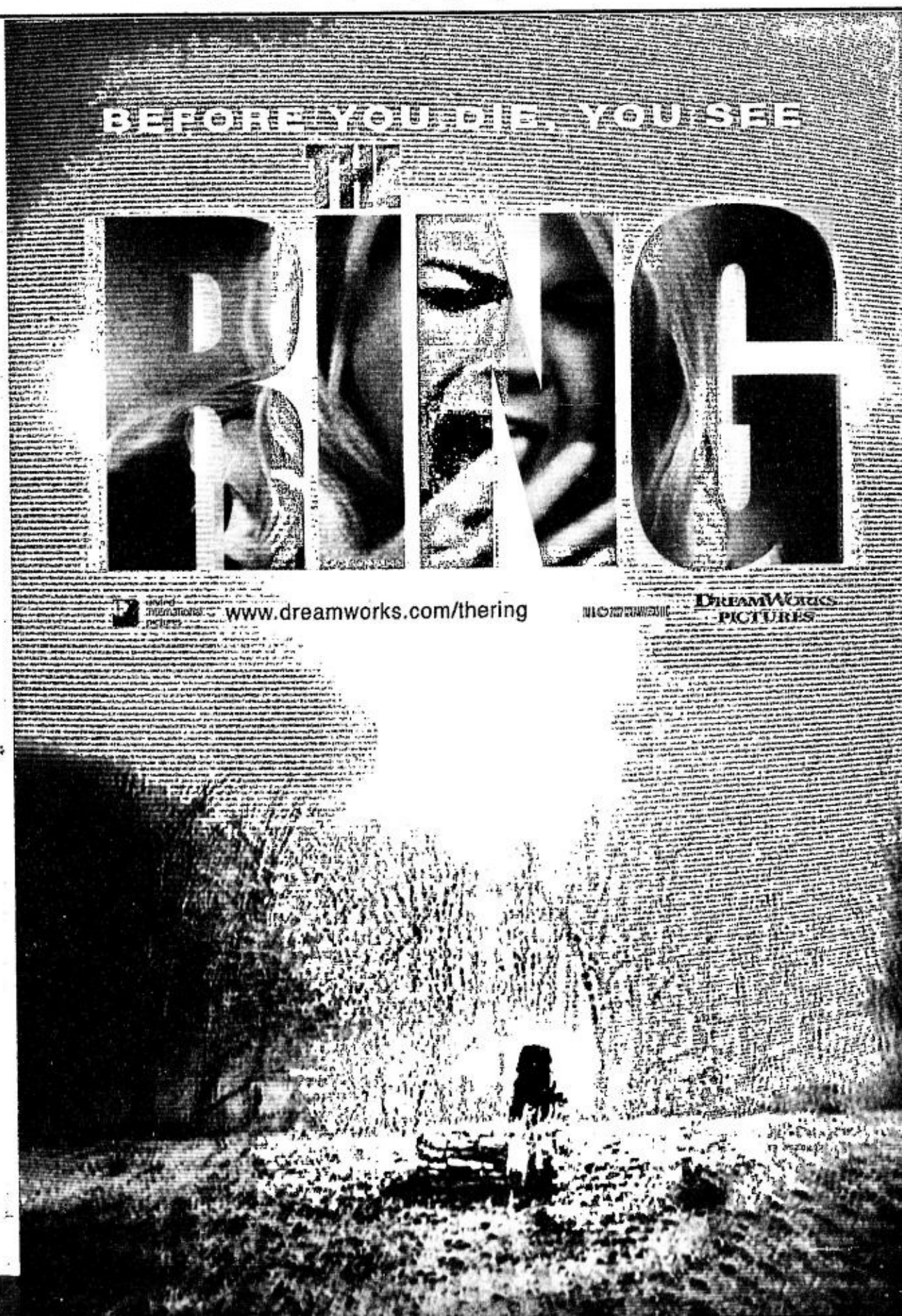
REVIEW

BEFORE YOU DIE, YOU SEE



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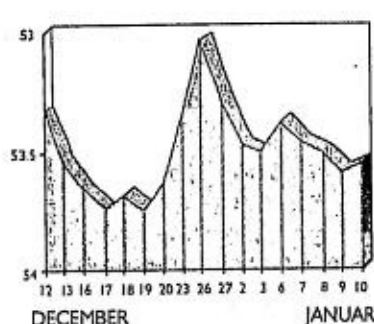
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BUSINESS

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INDICATORS CURRENCIES



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₱ 119.72 = \$

As of 5 p.m., Jan. 10, 2003

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per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 10, 2003

Jan. 10, 2002	Unit	Euro	Foreign	Foreign
Country		Equivalent	currency	currency
			In US\$	In Peso
United States	Dollar	0.953562	1.000000	53.544000
Japan	Yen	0.007992	0.008331	0.440800
United Kingdom	Pound	1.531897	1.506500	86.018400
Hongkong	Dollar	0.122266	0.128220	6.865400
Switzerland	Franc	0.685128	0.718494	38.471000
Canada	Dollar	0.614804	0.644745	34.522200
Singapore	Dollar	0.548276	0.574977	30.786600
Australia	Dollar	0.550015	0.576801	30.884200
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.529408	2.652590	142.030300
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.254269	0.266652	14.277600
Brunei	Dollar	0.546704	0.573329	30.698300
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000107	0.000112	0.006000
Thailand	Baht	0.022316	0.023403	1.253100
UAE	Dirham	0.259620	0.272264	14.578100
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.040700	56.151600
Argentina	Peso	0.287218	0.301205	16.127700
Brazil	Real	0.288433	0.302480	16.196000
Denmark	Kroner	0.134604	0.141159	7.558200
India	Ruppee	0.019924	0.020894	1.118700
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.250971	0.263193	14.009200
Mexico	New Peso	0.091364	0.095813	5.130200
New Zealand	Dollar	0.505493	0.530110	28.384200
Norway	Kroner	0.138311	0.145047	7.766400
Pakistan	Rupee	0.016427	0.017227	0.922400
South Africa	Rand	0.111632	0.117069	6.268300
Korea	Won	0.000808	0.000847	0.045400
Sweden	Kroner	0.109659	0.114999	6.157500
Syria	Pound	0.018515	0.019417	1.039700
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.027711	0.029061	1.556000
Venezuela	Bollivar	0.000626	0.000656	0.035100

STOCK MARKET

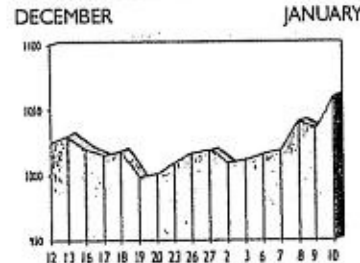
Finally some optimism in stocks

AFTER a very disappointing year, optimism is trickling back to the stock market consistent with the so-called January effect that has been lifting equities across the globe.

Despite tensions in the Middle East, the main-share Philippine Stock Exchange composite index rose 4.93 percent last week to close at 1,058.30 points on Friday. Bargain hunters picked up stocks that had fallen to historically low levels.

Summit Securities president Harry Liu said stock traders and investors were beginning to "see the light at the end of the tunnel." The

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B4)

SHARES/B4

By Clarissa S. Batino

BANKS are considering cutting the interest rates on credit cards in response to public clamor, a central bank official said quoting a letter sent by the Credit Card Association of the Philippines to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

BSP Deputy Governor Alberto Reyes said the credit card association had written the central bank, reporting that its members had already complied with a BSP circular that ordered the tightening of the procedure in approving credit card applications.

In the letter, the group said its members had already tightened their screening process by strictly checking the applicants' capacity to pay.

"The association also said its members are currently reviewing their interest rates. We took this to mean that they are considering bringing their rates down," Reyes said.

A reduction in credit card rates has been the subject of talks between the BSP and the association. Reyes, in an earlier interview, had said that "the credit card industry must first bring down their rates before it could get any allowance from the central bank in terms of regulations."

Credit card providers have been heavily criticized by customers because of their prohibitive rates.

The central bank suspects that credit card companies are passing on their losses from bad customers to those paying their debts on time, thus, penalizing the good customers with rates reaching about 40 percent a year

or 3.5 percent monthly.

The problem, according to Reyes, was brought about by the stiff competition among credit card firms and their aggressive marketing campaigns that resulted in the recruitment even of borrowers who didn't have the capacity to pay. This prompted the BSP to tighten the screening and evaluation of credit card applicants.

Under the BSP circular, banks and their subsidiary credit card companies are required to ensure that credit card applicants are capable of fulfilling their obligations by determining their net take home pay, for those who are employed, and the net monthly receipts, for those engaged in business or trading.

The same circular noted that "credit limits should also be based on the take home pay or net receipts."

Currently, 17 big banks and 11 thrift banks are engaged in the credit

card business mostly through tie-ups with big names in the industry such as Mastercard, Visa and Diners'.

Last year, the BSP started a review of the computation of past due accounts of credit card providers with an end in view of aligning the process with international best practices which, the BSP said, could be kinder to banks.

But the trade-off, said Reyes, would be a reduction in the interest rates and other charges imposed on credit card holders.

Under the present system, a credit card account that is not paid a day after due date is already considered past due. If this rule is relaxed as planned by the BSP, the industry's past due could go down substantially. The credit card association claimed that the industry's past due as of the first quarter last year was 8 percent of total receivables amounting to P47.09 billion while the BSP estimated it at 24 percent.

Gov't sets review of RP's WTO tariff commitments

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry has vowed to keep tariff rates on the country's industrial goods and agricultural commodities at their maximum levels sanctioned by the World Trade Organization in line with the President's protectionist stance.

Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II said the government was likely to keep the duties within their WTO bound rate (or tariff ceiling), which could mean raising duties on some items that have lower applied rates (the actual tariff imposed).

Roxas stressed that this policy would only apply to industrial goods or agricultural commodities produced in the country while products that were mostly imported and widely used as basic inputs would continue with their tariff cuts as scheduled.

"The WTO allows its members to adjust duties to their bound rates for the sake of their

domestic industry. We will exhaust all possible means to defer our compliance to the tariff cuts," Roxas said.

Roxas echoed a policy directive made by the President Friday to slow down the tariff liberalization to the very minimum and take full advantage of all exemption windows allowed particularly for the petrochemical industry.

The DTI-planned tariff adjustment would effectively put the brakes on the government's tariff liberalization program that led to steep cuts in the applied, most favored nation (non-Asean) tariffs in the 1990s. Roxas said the Philippines had been too hasty in cutting down its applied tariff rates way below the bound rates.

The Philippines is committed to reduce its MFN duties to no more than 5 percent by 2004, just 12 months after joining the Asean Free Trade Area where duties on the bulk of goods traded within the region are lowered to no more than 5 percent.

LBP plans sale of P20B worth of bad loans

LAND Bank of the Philippines has started serious talks with Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc., Deutsche Bank AG, and Merrill Lynch & Co. Inc. for the sale of P20 billion worth of bad loans and foreclosed assets.

The discussions, according to sources, have started long before last Friday's signing of the law providing tax incentives to asset management companies.

Landbank president Margarito Teves said his bank wanted to raise its capital by P20 billion this year to boost its agricultural lending activities, Landbank's primary mandate.

Teves hopes that Landbank, the country's fourth largest bank in terms of assets, would be able to dispose of at least half of its non-performing loans and foreclosed assets soon to finance a more aggressive farm lending strategy.

Bad loans account for about 25 percent of

GOV'T/B6

LBP/B7

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Big buyers vow to keep deals with RP suppliers

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

FOREIGN apparel buyers such as Polo Ralph Lauren, Phillips-Van Heusen and Liz Claiborne have committed to maintain their supply contracts with Philippine garments exporters through 2005 as long as Malacañang speeds up the release of their raw material shipments at the Bureau of Customs.

Confederation of Garments Exporter of the Philippines chair Donald Dee said the foreign buyers made their commitment to President Macapagal-Arroyo to assuage fears of an in-

dustry collapse once garments and textile quotas are discontinued starting 2005.

Dee said that while China was likely to dominate the garments and textile industry because of its cheap labor and adequate fabric supply, foreign buyers were looking at the Philippines and other Asian countries as one of their alternative suppliers.

However, Dee said the foreign buyers appealed to the President to initiate reforms in the country's customs procedures that would hasten the release of their imported fabrics and other raw materials to their contract manufacturers in the country.

Dee said the big foreign buyers warned that the undue delays in the processing of their basic inputs would diminish the Philippines' attraction as an alternative supplier. One of the recurring complaints by foreign buyers is that their 10-day production schedules are normally stretched to 15 or 20 days due to delays in the release of their fabrics from the BOC.

He noted that foreign buyers were extremely sensitive to delays in their production schedule considering that they have to bring their goods to the market on time before the next fashion trend comes in and render their goods passe. He said a supplier's ability to produce and deliver goods within the set provisions was a bigger consideration for foreign buyers than the actual cost of production. The low labor costs are likely to be erased by loss-

Bancassurance rules don't make sense

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General



BANGKO Sentral's Circular 357 signed by Governor Buenaventura last Nov. 8 allows insurance companies to sell policies at the head office and branches of a universal or commercial bank. Maurice Greenberg, big boss at American International Group, said the rules didn't make sense. I totally agree.

A life insurance company will be allowed to sell the entire range of products: term, whole life, endowment, health and accident policies, variable contracts and annuities. A non-life company will be allowed to sell fire, marine cargo, homeowner's and director's liability policies.

The personnel manning the outlets and selling the policies must be duly licensed by the Insurance Commission. This brings up a raft of questions. Will the bank be acting as a duly licensed agent of the insurance company? If so, will the bank be an ordinary agent, just taking orders, or a general agent with full powers to issue policies? Who will be the soliciting official as required by the Insurance Commission?

Or will the outlet be just another selling office of the insurance company? In which case, will the people manning the agency operations in every bank outlet be the employees of the bank, or of the insurance companies? Do they get salaries from the bank or commissions from the insurance company, or both?

Whatever the true nature of the outlet may be, the Bangko Sentral has placed independent insurance brokers

and agents at a grossly unfair disadvantage. I see these rules as another try, by government edict no less, at placing a big block of business beyond the reach of the independent brokers and agents.

A far thornier problem is created by the rule that the insurance company must be an affiliate (the bank owns at least 5 percent, not more than 50 percent) or a subsidiary (the bank owns more than 50 percent). Where the insured is a borrower of the bank and the policy is a requirement under the loan agreement, this cross ownership puts the bank in an irreconcilable conflict of interest.

Let us say you borrow money with your house as collateral. The loan agreement forces you to buy a fire policy from the bank's subsidiary insurance company. First off, you are deprived of your basic right to seek the widest policy terms at the cheapest premium from the most reputable companies in the most competitive business known to mankind. Also, you will lose the valuable services of your insurance broker or agent, on whom you have relied for help all these years.

Things really can get sticky if you have a claim. Remember that, under

the insurance contract, you are the party of the first part, the insurance company is the party of the second part. But, the policy also specifies that any claim is payable to the bank up to the outstanding balance of the loan. Although the bank is not a party to the contract, it is actually the beneficiary.

Now, let us say your kitchen goes up in smoke. And, as often happens, you think the adjuster's computation of the damage is too stingy. The insurance company naturally will take the side of the adjuster. After all, why hire an adjuster if the insurance company will not take his word?

But what will the stand of the bank be? If the bank sides with you, it will be deciding against its own subsidiary and its own interest. If the bank sides with the insurance company, you can rightfully shout that you are getting a raw deal. The bank is caught in a terrible conflict of interest. Whatever it does, the bank is wrong. And right smack in the middle of the conflict is you, the hapless borrower.

If the bank has no equity in the insurance company, the bank will likely take your side and use its tremendous clout on the insurance company to have your claim paid in full.

The conflict is not erased by the rule that the bank does not guarantee the insurance policy. In fact, not being a guarantor to the policy is another reason why the bank should allow you full freedom to seek the best policy available in an open market.

BANCASSURANCE/B5

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MADAME PRESIDENT, WE SUPPORT YOUR CALL FOR UNITY

The Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines, the Investment House Association of the Philippines, the Management Association of the Philippines, and the Bankers Association of the Philippines, representing the senior executives and management professionals from the largest business entities in the Philippines, are pleased to express our support to your call for national unity, as highlighted by your selfless renunciation of any future political aspirations.

Your call and your sacrifice have given all of us reason to believe that the Philippines can become a Strong Republic. Moreover, we can now take more pride in our President who puts the interest of our country ahead of any personal interest or ambition and urge all our leaders to follow such fine example. Your pronouncements last Rizal Day have set a new standard of leadership for all Filipinos to emulate.

We are in full agreement with your intention to focus on the economy and thus uplifting the welfare of our people, instead of being sidetracked by various political interests. We shall endeavor to support your initiatives in eradicating corruption, alleviating poverty and instituting reforms that will enable our industries to be globally competitive and to provide jobs for our people. We also appeal to Congress to pass the priority legislation.

Finally, we thank you for giving us hope for a brighter future and the inspiration to do what is right. In this challenge we stand firmly behind you Madame President.

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ADV'T.

Over OV

OCTAVIO V. Espiritu is weaving and ducking his undesired tag as banker-boxer by wisely not showing up in Friday's annual New Year cocktails tendered by Bangko Sentral Governor Rafael Buenaventura for the banking and financial community.

As expected, OV became the favorite pulutan of the suit brigade, especially with the four-hour surgery at the Makati Medical Center scheduled for the next day for ex-Far East Bank chief operating officer Vicente Panlilio.

Panlilio's nose was rearranged, thus the surgery, after OV's clenched fist unexpectedly landed on Panlilio's face when Panlilio dropped by unannounced at the Punta Fuego weekend home of OV on Dec. 29.

Doctors had initially thought that the injury was just limited to Panlilio's badly swollen left eye.

To those who may have missed Friday's column, Panlilio went to see his ex-Far East Bank boss/president to clear up reports that OV had been hurting over Panlilio's allegedly blaming OV for having failed to strengthen Far East Bank and live up to its credo, "A bank is forever." (The bank is now only a memory, having been taken over by the Bank of the Philippine Islands.)

According to the pro-Panlilio grapevine, ex-Far East Bank comptroller Josefina Balatbat had been keeping OV supplied with Panlilio's "badmouthing."

In any case, Panlilio was holding a glass of red wine when he knocked on OV's door, giving OV the impression that Panlilio was drunk and "overbearing."

But, according to the grapevine, Gov. Buenaventura is ready to testify that Panlilio, elder brother of Buenaventura's best friend, Chase Manhattan's Bobit Panlilio, that OV's unexpected visitor had only been drinking socially.

In fact, the two Panlilios had

COCKTALES

Victor C.
Agustin



been with the central bank governor enjoying cocktails when the elder Panlilio left with the golf cart, and the glass of wine, to drive up to OV's weekend retreat.

Panlilio later motored back to Buenaventura, who was shocked to see the banker now with a nasty puffed eye, still holding the glass of wine.

According to the grapevine, a repentant OV had sought the help of Buenaventura to mediate, and that the central bank governor unequivocally advised OV to eat his humble pie, visit Panlilio and unreservedly apologize for the unfortunate incident.

In the meantime, Panlilio has notified lawyer-TV talk show host Katrina Legarda, best friend of the Bangko Sentral first lady, Marivic Rufino-Buenaventura, to sharpen her already ferocious claws.

Still, mutual friends are hoping that, after the Monday morning quarter-backings and the public airings, the three decades of fraternity would prevail over the two ex-Far East bankers and that forbearance and forgiveness will find their way to their hearts.

After all, Panlilio's wife was a long-time personal assistant of OV, and OV's wife, Marilen, stood as the sole godmother in the Panlilio wedding.

In financial ICU

THE COUNTRY'S newest and world-class medical facility, the Asian Hospital, is in urgent need of financial transfusion.

This unfortunate scenario came about after the Dec. 23 special stockholders' meeting was cancelled for still unclear reason.

That meeting was supposed

COCKTALES/B4

ARMM home to RP's poorest

By Doris C. Dumlaog

THE AUTONOMOUS Region in Muslim Mindanao and three other regions are home to the country's poorest, according to the latest data released by the National Statistics Coordination Board.

The NSCB's new computations tagged 44 provinces in the ARMM, Bicol Region, Central Mindanao and the Caraga Region as the country's poorest, areas that, it said, were most in need of government intervention.

Sulu ranked as the poorest province in the Philippines, with the highest poverty incidence level of 63.2 percent, NSCB secretary general Romulo Virola disclosed in a news briefing.

The second poorest province was Masbate, with a poverty incidence level of 62.8 percent, followed by Tawi-Tawi, 56.5 percent.

Poverty incidence refers to the proportion of the population with a per capita annual income that is less than the minimum expenditure required to meet food and other non-food needs.

Those ranking fourth to 10th among the country's poorest provinces and their respective poverty incidence levels were: Ifugao, 55.6 percent; Romblon, 55.2 percent; Maguindanao, 5.1 percent; Lanao del Sur, 55 percent; Sultan Kudarat, 54.3 percent; Camiguin, 53.1 percent; and, Camarines Norte, 52.7 percent.

The poverty incidence levels in these provinces are much higher than the 28.4 percent latest estimate by the NSCB for the entire Philippines for 2000.

All four provinces in the ARMM were identified as among the 10 poorest in the country.

All six provinces in the Bicol Region were also categorized as poor—two of which made it to the top 10. These are Albay, Camarines Norte, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Masbate and Sorsogon.

In the same basket of regions with all poor provinces were: Central Mindanao (Lanao del Norte, North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat) and Caraga (Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte and Surigao del Sur).

"The slight poverty eradicated in the Visayas appeared to have been transferred to Mindanao," Virola said.

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Gov't to offer more dollar bonds as demand soars

By Clarissa S. Batino

DEMAND for the dollar-linked bonds that the government is set to issue this week reached P16 billion on Friday, prompting the Bureau of Treasury to increase the size of the debt notes maturing in three years to P5 billion from an original volume of P3 billion.

"We have decided to increase the size of the bonds by P2 billion after getting P16 billion worth of orders during the bookbuilding, but we would not sell more than P5 billion," National Treasurer Sergio Edeza said.

The strong appetite for bonds reflected how uninterested banks are with the local currency and how much they would like to hedge their exposure to the peso.

Bangko Sentral Governor Rafael Buenaventura insisted, however, that the peso would be

stable this year.

"I think the peso would average between 53 and 53.50 (to a dollar) this year, assuming no untoward event occurs. It would continue to move in tandem with other currencies," Buenaventura said.

Most traders, however, believed that the peso would trend down to 55 to a dollar. Some even projected a drop to 58.

Buenaventura welcomed the robust appetite for the government's upcoming bond issue, which would allow investors bearish on the peso to hedge their placements.

Edeza said the underwriters would price the bonds on Wednesday.

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Figaro in race to save the Barako

By Mei Magsino
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

(Last of a series)

IN 2000, Barako became the focus of Figaro Foundation Corp.'s efforts. As a result, the then nearly extinct Barako has become a

SPECIAL REPORT

well as Filipino homes.

"With the help of Dr. Andy Mojica of the Cavite State University, we at the coffee task force searched for the Barako tree all over the country and determined if it was really the Barako," Figaro director Chit Juan said.

The Barako farm in Barangay Dagatan at the coffee town of Amadeo in Cavite—Figaro Foundation's pilot farm—has 2,000 Barako trees planted and tended to by the resident farmers.

The Barako pilot farm is a two-hectare land owned by the family of Amadeo Mayor OJ Ambagan donated to Figaro to help revive the coffee industry.

"Barako was chosen for this project to save it from extinction, and also because it fetches a higher market price than Robusta—the variety most commonly grown in Cavite," Juan said. "The latest price on Robusta coffee is P45 per kilo. With Barako, it's doubled to P90. It's worth the effort."

"Coffee is one of our town's biggest sources of income," Ambagan said, "and it is our duty to help develop that. We now have the Pahimis (thanksgiving) festival, which is also called the Coffee Festival, in February to further boost the coffee industry."

The national average yield of coffee is only 500 kilograms (half a ton) a hectare or two kilograms of green beans per tree every harvest.

Since coffee is harvested once a year, that is also the figure per year.

In Cavite, however, where programs have been implemented to boost production, the average

coffee tree now yields three tons a hectare or six times the national average.

That means a boost to the production of up to 12 kilograms a tree, and a whopping 1,200 cups of brewed coffee from a single tree in a single harvest.

The project is envisioned to increase the income of coffee farmers from P15,000 per hectare per harvest to as high as P85,000 per hectare per harvest.

Involved in the project to revive the Barako are Juan, Ambagan, Amadeo councilor Rene Tongson, Andy Mojica, National Coffee Task Force team leader.

According to Juan, the foundation was supposed to start a program to revive the Barako in Lipa City in 2000.

"But the problem with Lipa is that there is no cooperators in the local level who, like Mayor Ambagan, would donate a land for us to plant the Barako and provide support to maintain the farm," she said.

The Leisure Farms in Tagaytay City has also devoted one hectare for the foundation's drive to revive the Barako. It now has the irrigated Barako farm where a thousand Barako trees have been planted.

Figaro Foundation is constantly in search of good ideas and opportunities to save both Barako and the local coffee industry.

"The program is to plant Barako to about 22,000 hectares of farm in five years all over the Philippines. We need to plant 100,000 Barako trees within the next five years for it to survive," Juan said. "We have already planted at least 4,000 hectares in Cavite and have identified another 4,000 hectares in Mindanao."

Juan said the Figaro Coffee Co. has also launched a program in its every cafe to help in the drive to revive the Barako.

"For every pack of Figaro coffee that you buy, P10 goes to the foundation to revive the Barako," she said.

For Juan, Lipa City might have lost its title as the coffee capital of the Philippines, but the fate of the Barako does not stop there.

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Bancassurance rules . . .

From page B2

Bancassurance, the selling of insurance policies through a bank, was born in Europe where cartels still abound. It will be well for Bangko Sentral to adopt the American way where the money lender is prohibited by law

to specify the insurance company, broker, or agent that will handle the insurance policy required under the loan agreement.

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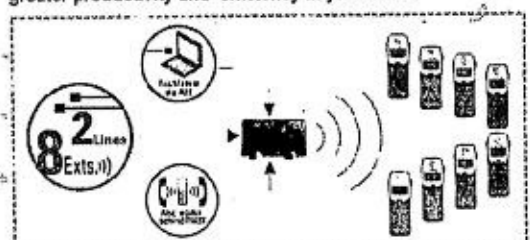
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DoE eyes investments, oil supply from Russia

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT of Energy said officials of a Russian oil company had visited the country to firm up talks on a possible oil supply deal amid growing concerns over an impending supply disruption should war break out in Iraq.

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. said the visit of a team from OJSC Rosneft Oil Co., led by its vice president Jurij Matveev, was an offshoot of a Philippine mission to Russia in October last year.

Perez and Speaker Jose de Venecia went with the team in Russia in the hope of securing adequate and diversified sources of fuel and to promote the Philippines as a springboard for the expansion of Russian investments in Asia.

In a statement, Perez said he was optimistic that the series of dialogues with Rosneft officials could soon lead to a commercial agreement.

Perez said officials of Rosneft, one of the largest Russian oil firms, signified strong interest in supplying crude oil to the country.

"This is a positive development in our efforts to diversify our sources of oil supply in light of recent international developments," he said, adding that the world's second largest oil producer, would give the country an alternative oil source that is nearer to the Philippines than the Middle East.

Further, Perez said Rosneft was invited to look into opportunities for oil and gas exploration in the country as he highlighted the recent signing of five contracts to conduct studies for such investments.

The five contracts involved Unocal and Rock Oil Corp., both of the United States; Sterling Energy of the United Kingdom, Japan Petroleum Exploration Co. Ltd., and Shell Philippines

Exploration BV.

"(Rosneft) would significantly boost our exploration sector if it would consider us an investment site," Perez said.

The Russian firm is currently involved in developing six oil and gas exploration projects in Sakhalin Island in the Russian Far East.

The projects are seen to yield 15-17 million tons of crude oil by 2015, bulk of which is expected to be exported.

Rosneft also operates in 19 regions in Russia with over 40 subsidiaries including eight oil and gas producers, three oil refineries and 16 marketing units.

Last year, the Russian state oil firm produced about 17 million tons of crude oil.

Perez said he was informed that initial indications showed that Sakhalin crude oil was of the quality that could meet the requirements of the local refineries.

KBP hit for stance on FM radio issue

By Abigail L. Ho

UPSTART broadcasting firm MediaOne Broadcasting Corp. has accused the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas of promoting monopoly by preventing the National Telecommunications Commission from opening the FM radio industry to new players.

In a statement issued over the weekend, MediaOne vice president for legal affairs Sheila Quien said the KBP was "misleading" both the NTC and the public by saying that allowing more firms to go into the FM radio business would be detrimental to both the industry and the public.

"The KBP's objection to opening up the FM spectrum does not serve the best interest of the public.

Maintaining the status quo will stifle healthy competition and prevent diversi-

ty in music, information and content available on the air today," she said.

The KBP has submitted a position paper to the NTC, which stated that allowing more players to enter the FM radio industry would result in poor service as consumers would receive overlapping signals on their radios.

To allow new players to operate FM stations in Metro Manila, the NTC will have to impose shorter frequency gaps between each station.

Under the current set-up, FM stations are 800 kilohertz apart from each other. For example, 96.3 dwRK is 800 kHz away from GMA Network Inc. FM station 97.1 dwLS.

"KBP's main argument—that a shorter band gap will result in supposed interference—is farthest from the truth. In fact, it seeks to mislead the NTC," Quien said.

"Other countries have long adopted the

400-kHz gap using analog technology that is already in use here in the country."

MediaOne accused the influential KBP of "exerting pressure" to prevent the NTC from allowing the broadcasting firm to enter the FM radio business.

After giving it a permit to conduct test broadcasts in August last year, then NTC chief Eliseo Rio Jr. ordered MediaOne to go off the air after an adjacent radio station reported signal overlaps.

"The KBP appears to be overly anxious about opening the doors to new players. It is really up to the NTC to decide on this, but we strongly believe that the government should not cave in to pressure that the KBP seems to be exerting. After all, it is public interest that should be of paramount concern, not the interest of the KBP and its members," Quien said.

The KBP is composed of local television and radio networks.



TRAVEL GUIDE VIA 'TEXTING'

MapCentral and Cybersoft Geoinformatics Inc. (CIGI), in cooperation with Asian Navigation and Tracking Systems Inc. (ANTS), recently launched the WOW Philippines Finder, an innovative information tool to address travel-related inquiries via mobile phone short messaging service (SMS) or "texting." MIC Holdings president and CEO Phillip E. Juico (left) and Enrique E. Macapinlac (right), ANTS president and CEO, explain to Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon (center) the simple process of getting travel information through the WOW Philippines Finder.

To Ro-Ro our boats is definitely not a dream anymore

OVER the years, among the Mindanao Business Council's (MBC) principal items for policy reforms has been on lowering the transport costs in Mindanao. In most, if not all, of MBC's consultations among the various economic players in Mindanao, high shipping expenses remain to be among their major concerns. The contribution of the island-economy to the gross productivity of the country, particularly on agriculture, cannot be undermined, hence, it is crucial to improve the efficiency and lower the costs of moving commodities to and from Mindanao.

The present transportation chain, however, still leaves much to be desired. Cargo handling for instance is estimated at 46 percent of the aggregate domestic sea transport costs. Spending roughly half of the expense for shipping is apparently exorbitant when in fact no major movement of cargo has taken place.

Together with the Coalition for Shipping and Ports Modernization, the Mindanao business community has been continually pushing for the upgrading of infrastructures that would help alleviate the ailing shipping industry. Almost a decade ago, overseas consultants studying Philippine shipping concluded that establishing roll-on roll-off (Ro-Ro) cargo services would provide the country with more efficient sea transport links. MBC has likewise actively pushed for the reinforcement of Ro-Ro capable ports.

Ro-Ro is a mode of marine transport in which people and cargo are wheeled on and off the vessel, earning the title of moving bridges, as vehicles can actually be loaded onto ships (imagine a ferry service).

The prevalent practice is the lift-on lift-off (Lo-Lo) process, which is tedious and evidently expensive. Ro-Ro, meanwhile, is anticipated to significantly lower the sea transport costs since it helps eliminate the handling of cargo (i.e., arrastre and stevedoring). It also enables faster turnaround of vessels because of increased efficiency in cargo loading and unloading. Major shipping companies in the liner sector already maintain Ro-Ro vessels but cannot operate them within the present port infrastructure in Mindanao.

Nonetheless, good news comes along the way of Mindanao shippers as the government shows support for Ro-Ro shipping in modernizing the Pan Philippine Highway ferry terminals, linking therefore the country's major road system from Luzon to Visayas and Mindanao. This was preceded by a resolution passed during the 2001 National Socio-economic Summit encouraging the implementation of Ro-Ro and further buttressed by the declaration of the President, who included in her priorities the improvement of the transportation logistics from Mindanao to Luzon through Ro-Ro facilities.

Likewise, the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) has been tasked to put into operation the Sustainable Logistics Development Program (SLDP), which is geared toward reducing transport costs through a P30-billion Ro-Ro port and ferry system from Mindanao all the way to Visayas and Luzon.

An executive order on the promotion of private sector participation or investment in Ro-Ro Terminal Systems (RRTS) is also slated to

MINDANAO ONE

Joji Ilagan-Bian



be signed. The EO exempts Ro-Ro shipments from cargo handling charges since no handling of cargo takes place. Ro-Ro tariffs will not be based on the type of cargo carried on the vehicle but on its lane meter length, thereby eliminating the priority of shipping operators for Class A cargoes which have relatively higher tariffs (agricultural products are classified as Class C). In addition, commercial use of RRTS commercial ports is allowed under the new EO.

Transforming our major ports to become Ro-Ro capable may require more than the provision of ramps. In a full Ro-Ro operational port, large back-up areas and facilities that function as staging areas for the vehicles prior to the loading need to be provided. Given this need for huge capital investments, the SLDP is expected to facilitate private sector ventures in developing Ro-Ro systems. Promoting private investments in the construction of RRTSs will maximize the potential the newly introduced infrastructure offers.

Meanwhile, stakeholders in Mindanao are absolutely looking forward to reaping the benefits of Ro-Ro facilities. As it is, the Leyte-Surigao and Kolambagan-Ozamiz routes are the only ports in Mindanao with complete Ro-Ro services at present.

Extensively converting all of the major ports in Mindanao to cater to the demands for Ro-Ro facilities would indeed enhance the flow of service, capital and commodities not only within the country but in the BIMPEA as well. Ro-Ro infrastructure is expected to supplement the agreement on economic and human exchanges within the region. Currently, there is already a proposed Asian Highway Network through the construction of Ro-Ro ramp facilities for different Mindanao ports.

Mindanao is a strategic sea route and transshipment point for exporters and importers in BIMPEA. Case in point: shipments from Bitung bound to the US can be sent through nearby General Santos instead of Jakarta. Mindanao exporters can likewise send their products to Singapore through Bitung than Manila. Possible sea linkages of Cagayan de Oro, Davao, and General Santos with Sarawak are already being explored, as well as the Zamboanga-Sandakan route.

Indeed, these hard-earned gains to improve the sea transport industry are very much appreciated in Mindanao, which largely depends on shipping to move its sizeable agricultural output both in the domestic and foreign markets. Definitely, Mindanaoans have no illusions that establishing Ro-Ro facilities shall serve as a panacea to all their shipping woes. This very substantial reform in the shipping sector, nevertheless, is one big leap toward full agri-fisheries modernization in Mindanao.

(The author is the chair of the Mindanao Business Council)

Big buyers vow to keep deals with RP suppliers

From page B2

es arising from unforeseen delays in bringing the goods to the market.

Polo Ralph Lauren had suggested to the government that it adopt a vendor-rating program in its customs operations that would give pre-shipment clearances to certified garments manufacturers.

Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II said that the Department of Trade and Industry has been conducting a pilot test with 5 garments exporters that have been allowed to use a "green lane" at the BOC to facilitate the release of raw materials.

Roxas said the DTI has also implemented a

paperless permit the Electronic Visa information service that would cut the processing time of export visas to the US from 8 to 4 hours.

Roxas said the government was committed to making the Philippine garments industry competitive in the next 2 to 3 years. He said the Philippines was the first in Asia to implement social responsibility in manufacturing through the Garments and Textile Export Board's reaccreditation program.

He said the GTEB's Garments Export Industry Transformation Plan and Assistance Package has already led to P434 million worth of investments in modern equipment and production system by 70 apparel makers.

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IMF not seeking increased cash from members

WASHINGTON—The International Monetary Fund on Friday said it would not seek an increase in subscriptions from member nations, a decision which should leave the cash the fund has available for lending unchanged for the next five years.

The IMF holds a review of its subscriptions, or quotas, every five years.

During the latest review, IMF managing director Horst Koehler had asked major shareholders to consider increasing the cash made available to the fund's pool of resources.

But several large shareholders including the United States, the lender's largest contributor, said they saw no need to increase funding to the IMF right now.

IMF insiders told Reuters that an increase in quotas was made impossible by opposition from the United States, Germany and Canada, which together control about 26 percent of the IMF board's votes. To secure an increase in quotas would have required an 85 percent vote at the lender's board.

Sources said that some other nations, like Japan and France, had been in favor of increasing IMF subscriptions but that on balance there was agreement that the lender has enough liquidity for the time being.

IMF chief Koehler had said that the lender has enough money for now but still urged shareholders to consider increasing the amount of cash available to help IMF resources keep up with the expected growth of the global economy in the next five years.

Opponents of that notion feared that piling up more cash in the IMF's coffers would ultimately pressure the lender to dole out more loans than would otherwise be the case.

The latest decision from the IMF also leaves the voting power of member nations unchanged.

Emerging market nations from Latin America, Asia and Africa have complained that they are poorly represented on the IMF's 24-seat board, which is heavily weighted toward Europe and only includes two African seats.

In its latest statement, the IMF said that it will consider changes in its voting structure during its next review, which will begin immediately after the latest review is completed at the IMF's Board of Governors with a vote by Jan. 28.

Emerging economies have been seeking a change to the IMF's voting procedures in recent years and have also questioned the fact that the head of the IMF is always a European. *Reuters*

Creditors offer to refinance BSP borrowing

By Clarissa S. Batino

CREDITORS of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas have offered a club loan to refinance a \$550-million borrowing that would fall due in April this year.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the central bank had received such offers from the banks exposed to the \$550-million borrowing.

"Some of the banks asked us if we can just negotiate. They said there is no need for a new borrowing. But we will still evaluate the offers," said the BSP chief.

Buenaventura explained that a club loan usually meant that banks with exposure to a maturing loan would agree to refinance the borrowing. "When you have a club loan, you do not need underwriters and you can save on the fees," he noted.

The BSP said the \$550-million loan was priced favorably considering that it was contracted during the Estrada administration when the government paid substantial premium to most of its borrowings.

Buenaventura believed the interest rate of that particular loan was the lowest ever for a BSP borrowing in recent years.

The loan, underwritten by ABN-Amro, carried a spread of 1.19 percentage points over six-month London Interbank Offered Rate or an interest rate of 7.3 percent.

LBP plans sale ...

From page B1

Landbank's total loan portfolio. Most of these accounts were incurred in the early 1990s when the bank ventured into aggressive commercial lending.

Among Landbank's problematic accounts are Petrochemicals Corp. of Asia Pacific where it has a P1.5-billion exposure; National Steel Corp., P1.2 billion; All Asia Trust, P932 million; Reynolds Phils., P932 million; Profinda Holdings, P400 million, and Victorias Milling Corp., P389 million.

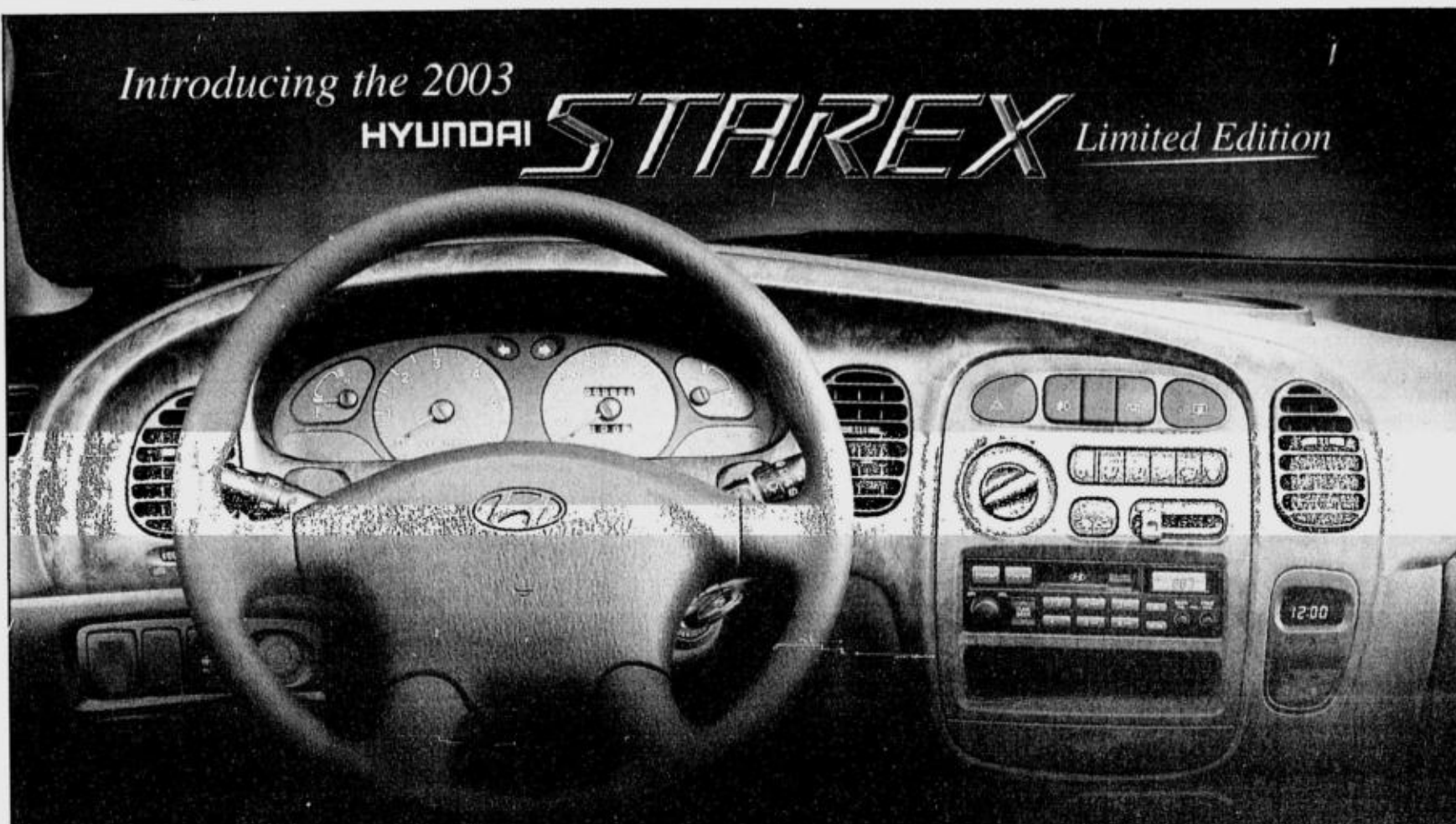
In 2000, the bank decided to refocus its thrust to farm lending.

Agriculture loans accounted for about 45 percent of the bank's P109 billion loans in 2002, according to the Landbank president.

Teves said the bank wanted to increase farm lending to 55 percent of total loans this year and to 65 percent by 2004 to help develop the farm sector, which accounts for a fifth of the country's gross domestic product and two-fifths of the country's workforce.

Aside from selling bad loans and assets to AMCs or special purpose vehicles, Landbank hopes to bring down its non-performing loans through aggressive collection campaign, restructuring of debts, adopting dacion en pago or payment-in-kind arrangements, and foreclosure of certain loans. *Clarissa S. Batino*

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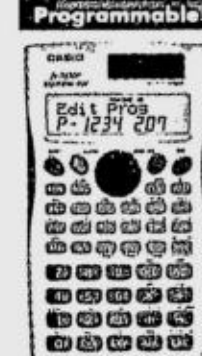
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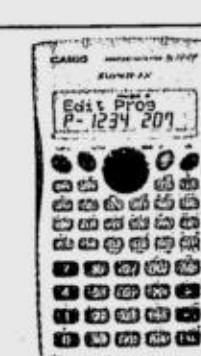
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PORT DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN LUZON
164 13th Street, Port Area, Manila
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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION AND TO BID

All interested parties with capitalization of not less than P30,000,000.00 are invited to apply for pre-qualification and, if pre-qualified to bid for the

LEASE, CONSTRUCTION, MANAGEMENT, OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF PASSENGER TERMINAL FACILITY AT THE PORT OF CALAPAN, CALAPAN CITY, ORIENTAL MINDORO

Issuance of Bid Documents January 29 - February 4, 2003
Pre-Bid Conference February 28, 2003
Submission of Bid Documents Not later than 2:00 PM, March 17, 2003
Opening of Qualification Documents 2:00 PM, March 17, 2003
Opening of Technical Proposals 10:00 AM, March 24, 2003
Opening of Financial Proposals 10:00 AM, March 31, 2003

Bid documents may be secured upon presentation of Letter of Intent and payment of non-refundable amount of P5,000.00 exclusive of VAT, at the Port District Office of Southern Luzon at the above address. The venue for all activities shall be at the Port District Office of Southern Luzon.

The Philippine Ports Authority reserves the right to reject any or all bids or any part thereof, waive any defect of informality therein and to accept the bids most advantageous to the government.

(Sgd.) HECTOR E. MIOLE
Port District Manager

(PDI-Jan. 13, 21 & 28, 2003)



LOCAL WATER UTILITIES ADMINISTRATION
P.O. Box 634 U.P. Post Office, Katipunan Road, Batara, Quezon City
Tel. No. 920-55-81 to 99, 921-56-01 Fax No. (632) 922-34-84
Administration's Direct Line (02) 920-61-01
Administration's E-mail Address: info@lwua.com
LWUA E-Mail Address: lwua@lwua.com

December 17, 2002

MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 008-02

TO : ALL WATER DISTRICTS
SUBJECT : REVIEW OF WATER TARIFF ADJUSTMENTS OF WATER DISTRICTS

The Local Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) made known its stand on Executive Order (EO) No. 123, entitled: "Reconstituting the National Water Resources Board", particularly Sec. 6, thereof.

In its letter dated 04 December 2002 addressed to Hon. Avelino Cruz, Jr., Chief Presidential Legal Counsel, Office of the President, copy of which attached as Annex "A", LWUA stated thus:

"In view of the foregoing, while we adhere to the legal principle that an Executive Order cannot effectively amend a Presidential Decree, we take the stand that LWUA will continue reviewing the water tariff adjustments of water districts which it has financial exposure and upon the satisfactory completion thereof the approved rates shall then be implemented in accordance with Section 63 of PD 198, as amended. To promote the financial viability of these water districts, we shall accordingly inform the water districts in a circular the soonest."

For your information and guidance.

(Sgd.) LORENZO H. JAMORA
Administrator

(PDI - Jan. 13, 15 & 17, 2003)

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(PDI-Jan. 13, 20 & 27, 2003)

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PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

NOTICE TO DEPOSITORS OF THE CLOSED MEYCAUAYAN RURAL BANK (BULACAN), INC.

The Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation (PDIC) will start its operations for the servicing of claims for insured deposits in the closed Meycauayan Rural Bank (Bulacan), Inc. (MRBI) on January 14, 2003.

Depositors are advised to proceed to designated payoff sites on dates indicated below, to file their claims for insured deposits. Claim forms will be issued free of charge. PDIC representatives shall service claims and entertain queries of depositors during office hours, Monday to Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.

PDIC has also designated Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) as its paying agent for the two (2) banking units of Meycauayan Rural Bank, Inc. Numbers of approved claims filed with MRBI - Bocaue and Karuhatan Branches that have been turned over by PDIC representatives to the LBP Servicing Branch shall be posted at the payoff site. Depositors are therefore requested to refer to these posters before proceeding to the LBP servicing branch for payment of claims. Duly processed claims in MRBI - Meycauayan (Head Office), Malhacan, Calvario, Bancal and Mandalay Branches shall be paid by PDIC Disbursing Officers.

Servicing Dates	Payoff Site	MRBI Office/Branch	Servicing Branch
January 14 to February 6, 2003	Mac Arthur Highway, Calvario, Meycauayan, Bulacan	Meycauayan, Head Office	-
	Calvario, Meycauayan Bulacan	Calvario	-
January 14 to January 30, 2003	Malhacan, Meycauayan Bulacan	Malhacan	-
	Karuhatan, Valenzuela City Metro Manila	Karuhatan	LBP - Valenzuela
January 14 to January 23, 2003	Wakas, Bocaue Bulacan	Bocaue	LBP - Balagtas
	Mandalay, Valenzuela City Metro Manila	Mandalay	-
January 14 to January 21, 2003	Bancal, Meycauayan Bulacan	Bancal	-

After the said dates, all depositors can file their claims personally at the PDIC office from Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., or by mail addressed to -

The Manager
Claims Processing Department
Philippine Deposit Insurance Corporation
2228 Chino Roces Avenue, 1231 Makati City

Depositors are advised to present the following requirements to the PDIC representatives when filing their claims for insured deposits:

- Original evidence of deposit such as Savings Passbook, Certificate of Time Deposit; and/or Latest Bank Statement and Unused Checkbooks; and
- Two (2) latest identification cards/documents (IDs) bearing the depositor's specimen signature.

Other documents may be required by the PDIC representatives in the course of their processing of claims filed.

Pursuant to the provisions of R.A. 3591 as amended by R.A. 7400, the prescriptive date (last day) for filing of claims for insured deposits in the closed Meycauayan Rural Bank (Bulacan), Inc. is on May 22, 2004. After May 22, 2004, PDIC as insurer, shall no longer accept any claim for insured deposits maintained with the said closed bank.

PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION

(PDI - Jan. 12 & 13, 2003)



National Power Corporation

Small Power Utilities Group
Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID

For the SALE of UNSERVICEABLE ITEMS

"as is, where is"

Date of Bid Opening: JANUARY 27, 2003

ITEM DESCRIPTION/ LOCATION	MINIMUM BID PRICE
TANK, Waste Oil Storage Tank No. 4, 90 cu.m. capacity	P 150,400.00
TANK, Waste Oil Storage Tank No. 5, 90 cu.m. capacity	P 84,600.00
Location: NPC-SPUG Nagã Mooring Site, Naga, Cebu	

Sealed bids in the prescribed form shall be received until 10:00 AM on January 27, 2003 at the NPC-SPUG Office, 2/F Training Center Bldg., NPC-OB, Quezon Ave. cor. Agham Rd., Diliman, Q.C. and shall then and there be opened and publicly read:

ALL BIDS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE FOLLOWING:

- PROPOSAL BOND DEPOSIT IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE; and
- LATEST INCOME TAX RETURN OF THE BIDDER (2001) OR FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE COMPANY (ORIGINAL OR BIR CERTIFIED TRUE COPY)
- CERTIFICATE OF SITE INSPECTION ISSUED BY THE MANAGER, SPUG-VISAYAS

Additional information, request for inspection and bid forms at P50.00 per set may be secured from Ms. P. F. Victoria at the above address or call Tel. No. 9213190/9213541 Local 5583. Deadline for the issuance of bid forms is 3:00 PM on January 24, 2003.

The Corporation reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any informality found therein and to accept/reject such proposals as may be advantageous to its interest.

SPUG ASSET MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

(Sgd.) R.C. CASTILLO
Chairman

(PDI - Jan. 13, 14 & 15, 2003)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT
FOURTH JUDICIAL REGION
BRANCH 21
IMUS, CAVITE

IN RE: PETITION FOR REHABILITATION

SEC CASE NO. 025-02

SOUTHERN LUZON COLLEGE
OF BUSINESS, MARITIME, SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY, INC.,
Petitioner.

STAY ORDER

This is a petition for rehabilitation filed by the petitioner, Southern Luzon College of Business, Maritime, Science and Technology, Inc., a corporation duly organized and existing under the laws of the Republic of the Philippines with principal place of business at Congressional East Avenue, Dasmariñas, Cavite, praying that the court forthwith issue a stay order pursuant to Section 6, Rule 4 of the Interim Rules, and after due notice, publication and hearing, judgment be rendered approving the Rehabilitation Plan and suspending payments by petitioner to its creditors until such time as indicated in the Rehabilitation Plan when it can resume repayment of its indebtedness to all its creditors.

Petitioner alleges, among others, that it is an educational institution engaged in offering of Pre-Elementary, Elementary, Secondary, Vocational-Technical and College Courses in accordance with up-to-date and modern educational theories and methods prescribed and authorized by the Department of Education, the Technical Education Skills Development Authority and the Commission on Higher Education; that since the early years of its operation, petitioner realized profitability and did not experience difficulty in paying its creditors, suppliers and employees; that for a continuous span of six (6) years of operation, petitioner performed well and went with the rise and fall of the economy never defaulting in its payment to its creditors, suppliers, and employees; that it encountered difficulty only during the last quarter of 1999 when it opened its maritime courses and purchased the necessary equipment required and needed for the course; that to cope up with its financial needs to support its purchases of equipment to comply with the CHED's requirements, petitioner was compelled to go on private borrowings with a little higher interest rates; that at first, with the steady profitability of petitioner's operation, it was able to regularly service and pay its obligation to its creditors, suppliers and employees; that however, the confluence of the gradual decrease of enrollment, steep depreciation of the Philippine peso that followed, the high interest rates from private borrowings and the severe economic crunch prevailing in the country particularly during the last four (4) years, adversely affected the operation of the petitioner; that this resulted in its inability to realize enrollment projections that would have enabled it to meet and/or pay its obligations; that with poor or decreasing enrollment, high interest rates on its borrowings, increasingly higher labor and other administrative expenses, petitioner is currently in default in servicing or paying its maturing obligations as they fall due; that presently, there are pending cases against the petitioner and its corporate officers; that there are also threats of suits and number of demands to enforce claims against the petitioner; that petitioner stands to have a big chance to operate with profitability if it can be granted temporary relief from remitting payments to pay off matured and maturing obligation, by way of rehabilitation and allow it to defer debt servicing until it is able to realize profitability again for the benefit of its creditors, employees and stockholders; and that petitioner pleads for relief from all its financial obligations through a judicial order allowing petitioner to suspend payment of its debts in accordance with the rehabilitation plan until its full resumption of debt repayments.

Finding the petition to be sufficient in form and substance, a STAY ORDER is hereby issued pursuant to Section 6, Rule 4 of the Interim Rules of Procedure on Corporate Rehabilitation as follows:

- Staying enforcement of all claims, whether for money or otherwise and whether such enforcement is by court action or otherwise, against the petitioner, its guarantors and sureties not solidarily liable with the debtor;
- Prohibiting the petitioner from selling, encumbering, transferring or disposing in any manner any of its properties except in the ordinary course of its business;
- Prohibiting the petitioner from making any payment of its liabilities outstanding as at the date of the filing of this petition;
- Prohibiting the petitioner's supplier of goods or services from withholding supply of goods and services in the ordinary course of business for as long as the petitioner makes payments of the services and goods supplied after the issuance of this stay order;
- Directing the payment in full of all administrative expenses incurred after the issuance of this stay order.

Meanwhile, Atty. Bienvenido S. Magnaye, Chairman, TACK International Philippines, Inc. and Audio Dyn Farm Productions, Inc., President, Jupiter Bendel Technologies, Inc., Principal, BSM Management and Legal Services, and Inocentes De Leon Leogardo Alenza Magnaye and Azucena Law Office, Vice-President, Philippine Dispute Resolution Center, Inc. and Accredited Arbitrator, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry and National Conciliation and Mediation Board is hereby appointed as Rehabilitation Receiver and is hereby directed to assume his position as such upon the taking of an oath before the Branch Clerk of this Court and after posting of a bond in the amount of P1,000,000.00 executed in favor of petitioner Southern Luzon College of Business, Maritime, Science and Technology, Inc. to guarantee the faithful discharge of his duties as Rehabilitation Receiver and the Orders of this Court.

The petitioner is hereby directed to publish this Stay Order in a newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines, once a week for two (2) consecutive weeks.

All creditors and all interested parties, including the Securities and Exchange Commission, are hereby directed to file and serve on the petitioner, Southern Luzon College of Business, Maritime, Science and Technology, Inc., their verified comment on or opposition to this petition, with supporting affidavits and documents, not later than ten (10) days before the date of the initial hearing. Failure of the creditors and all interested parties, including the Securities and Exchange Commission, to file their verified comment on or opposition will bar them from participating in this proceedings.

Within such time as to enable them to file their verified comment on or opposition to the petition and to prepare them for the initial hearing of this case, all creditors and all interested parties, including the Securities and Exchange Commission, are hereby directed to secure from this Court copies of the petition and its annexes.

Finally, the initial hearing of this case is hereby set on January 17, 2003 at 8:30 o'clock in the morning.

SO ORDERED.

Imus, Cavite, November 27, 2002.

(Sgd.) NORBERTO J. QUISUMBING, JR.
Judge

(PDI - Jan. 6 & 13, 2003)

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MESSAGE OF THANKS

Expedita Ebarle Tañada

Joined her Creator and her husband Lorenzo M. Tañada on December 11, 2002

"Her eternity is in God's love and in our remembering"

Her children Tito and Zeny Ledesma, Bobby and Zeny Reyes, Myrna and Willie Sanchez, Chona and Nardi Silos, Millette and Adrian Ocampo, Tessie and Carlos Yam, Learnny and Baba Tan; her 47 grandchildren, grandchildren-in-law, 71 great grandchildren and relatives wish to express their profound gratitude to all those who condoled with their presence, flowers, Mass offerings and prayers and gave donations to the Lorenzo M. Tañada Foundation.

MESSAGE OF THANKS

We, the parents Ernesto and Aurora; sister Shirley Marie; brothers Sandy and Edwin; sister-in-law Maria Luisa and relatives of the late

MA. AURORA EDNA A. ORTEGA

who passed away on January 7, 2003, wish to express our sincere gratitude to all those who comforted us with their presence, sent flowers and spiritual offerings, kept vigil with us, and in immeasurable ways were just there for us when we needed them most.

"...absent with the body to be present with the Lord." Matthew 10:39

ISABEL "NAY SABEL"
L. de LUNA

Died peacefully in the Grace of our Lord on January 11, 2003 at the age of 80.

Her bereaved family, relatives and friends request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at her family residence in 8th & 27th Sts. Villamor Air Base, Pasay City.

Interment will be in her birthplace at Butti, Camarines Sur.

LUZ Z. OCSIO

International Pharmaceutical Bowl of Hygeia
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 of Marikina and Cotabato City

Peacefully joined her Creator on January 11, 2003 at the age of 92.

Her loving children Rene (†) and Sylvia, Luzminda (†), Joaquin and Josefina and Jose, grandchildren, nieces and nephews request the pious readers to pray for her eternal rest.

Her body lies at St. Joseph Chapel, Provident Village Marikina City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, January 15, 2003 at Loyola Memorial Park Marikina after the 3:30 p.m. Mass.

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
 Matthew 10:39



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Penalties . . .

More speculations with delays in awarding of DBM project

"Virus creators and hackers could be treated similarly to some extent. One difference between the virus creator and a hacker is that the latter has other motives behind his activity apart from gaining fame," Cluley said.

But up until this time, the

"What's going around is unverified. It might be true or might be wrong," the source said. "The DBM should come out officially to indicate that the bidding process is finished. We're wondering what is taking them long."

Two executives belonging to

The source noted that this is

"Assuming that ITBF Philippines has won the project, the agency should be able to explain the basis of their decision," the source said.

Windows 95, 3.1 in memoriam

In effect, users should upgrade to the latest Windows packages, particularly Windows XP if they are to avail of support services and take advantage of the newest PC software. Microsoft says this "death" is merely part of the continuing evolution of the platform, following their product roadmap going into the new millennium.

The GUI was simply a non-entity in most IBM compatible PCs even into the early 1990s amid the decades-old presence of the graphics-laden Apple Macintosh system. Even with Macintosh and the earlier Windows (1.0 to 3.0) versions around, DOS still ruled and Windows users were called "WIMPs" or an acronym

to the limelight. Almost all PC software had since migrated to the Windows environment, except for some DOS loyalists. The new Windows platform created a big exodus to this new graphical look-and-feel that enticed users to switch, particularly those heavy on the emerging desktop publishing, graphics and gaming applications. It was not long before when office applications were eventually packaged as suites designed specifically for Windows, though some other boxes such as the old Lotus 1-2-3 and WordStar kept dual versions on DOS and Windows. The entry of a network client upgrade, Windows 3.11, started another rebirth of sorts for the platform—this time transform

Aside from these, Windows 95 offered never-before-heard features for PC users, including multitasking, advanced file systems and threading.

Love them or hate them for turning Microsoft into what industry players and observers believe as an "arrogant monopoly" in the PC software arena, Windows 3.1 and Windows 95 will be remembered as among the most important software products ever developed and released. They have indeed etched an indelible mark in the continuing progress of personal computing.

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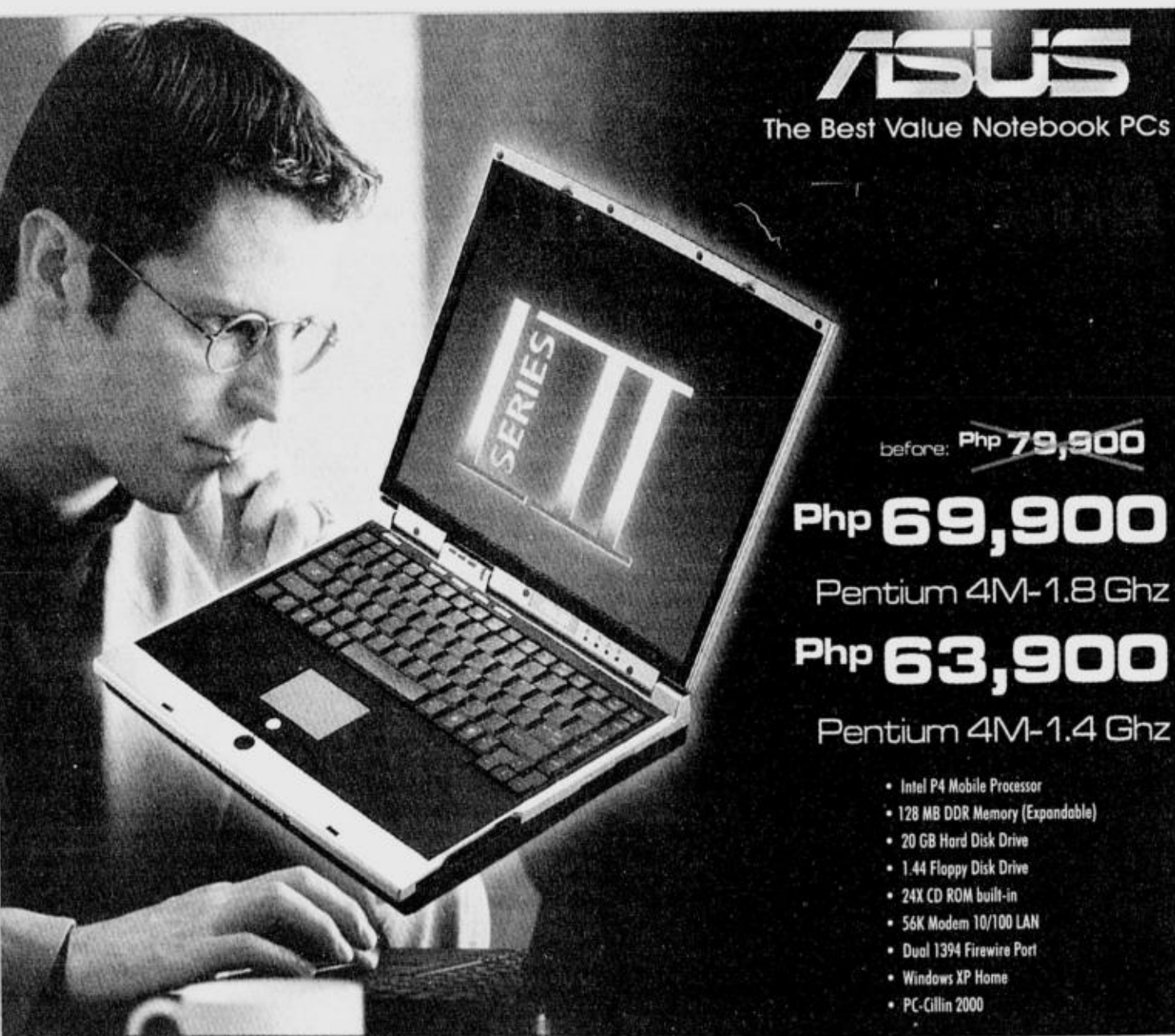
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Filipino Microsoft exec . . .

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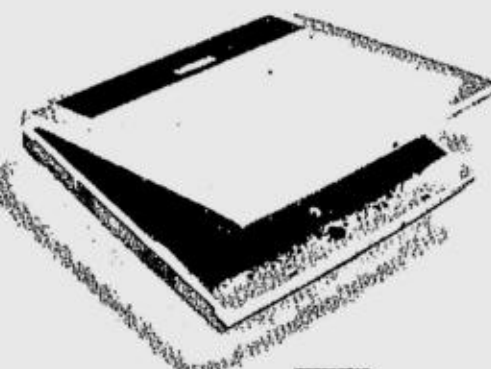
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Editor Leo Magno

Filipino Microsoft exec to retire at 45

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva

A FILIPINO Microsoft executive announced his early retirement Friday, after deciding that it was about time to pursue his dream career after completing his obligations with the software behemoth.

Joey Gurango, 45, held several positions at Microsoft Business Solutions (formerly known as Microsoft Great Plains Software) research and development center in the Philippines for four years.

The last post he took was managing director of Microsoft Business Solutions.

"What really drove my decision to retire later this year was when Great Plains was bought by Microsoft four years ago," Gurango told INQ7.net. The decision, however, was made last year.

In 2001, Microsoft Corp. bought Great Plains, and was subsequently named as Microsoft Great Plains Business Solutions division.

"At that time, I had the money (to pursue my dream) but was required to stay on with the company (Great Plains Philippines) for two years with Microsoft, and later extended to two more years because I was learning a lot," Gurango added.

Gurango became head of Great



GURANGO

Plains Philippines after Great Plains Software USA decided to acquire his software company called Match Data Systems in 1999.

He was managing director for the new Great Plains Philippines subsidiary for two years.

"There are two reasons why I'm retiring. I'm finished with my obligations with Microsoft. Two, I have learned what I need to about running a multinational company," Gurango said.

"I could now leave with a good

conscience," he added.

Gurango said that he intends to become a mentor capitalist—an investor that would be injecting both financial and knowledge capital into business ventures, later this year.

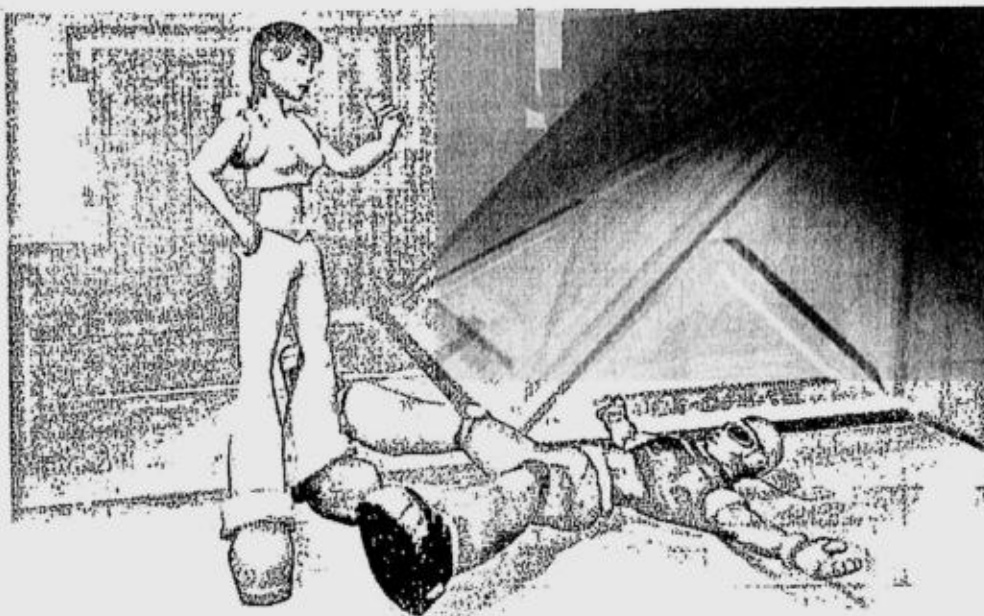
"I've been working for Microsoft Business Solutions for almost four years now. I just decided that 2003 would be the year to move on and seek new challenges," said Gurango who had given up the post of Asia Pacific regional director for Products and Services at the company last year as an apparent prelude to his early retirement this year.

"Working for the world's most successful software company has been extremely exciting and educational. Combined with 18 years of experience as an entrepreneur, I now have a global business perspective that I couldn't have gotten anywhere else. Applying that perspective to help other Filipino entrepreneurs is going to be a lot of fun for me," Gurango added in a statement.

The executive disclosed that he is already studying several proposals but has not decided where to invest his money.

Born and raised in the Philippines, Gurango migrated to the United States in 1977, where he took odd

FILIPINO/B11



FUZION FRENZY

Fuzion, not confusion

By Joey G. Alarilla

FACE it: Party games don't exactly have the best reputation in the world. The idea is to have a fun game where you and your family or a bunch of friends can relax on the sofa or sit on the floor, pass around some chips and down some brew (or soda or juice, if your momma won't let you drink the hard stuff). Obviously, the game has to appeal to different people—even casual gamers.

Unfortunately, many developers out there equated party games with cutesy kid stuff or console versions of board games. I mean, what's the point of having an Xbox if all you're gonna do with it is play Monopoly? No offense to Infogrames and Runecraft, which released Monopoly Party on the Xbox, but Monopoly is Monopoly, whether it's on a next-generation console or the beat-up cardboard box somewhere in your room. Might as well just play pusoy dos or charades.

Thankfully, Fuzion Frenzy lives up to its name and shows that a party game can really be fast and furious. Most of the 45 mini-games are highly entertaining, showcasing the advanced capabilities of the Xbox. I'm talking fast frame rates, great lighting and particle effects. Kudos to developer Blitz Games and publisher Microsoft for this solid game. Too bad they didn't make the characters more attractive.

As the intro informs you, Fuzion Frenzy is set sometime in the near future, when the city has become a battleground for you and your friends. Fortunately, this game doesn't pretend to have a storyline and instead just invites you to jump right in and start playing. Don't expect anything deep or meaningful. This is a loud and colorful arcade-type game—the kind of mindless fun anybody can enjoy. Personally, Fuzion Frenzy provides a welcome break from the intense and gory battles in "Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance," which is next in my lineup of Xbox game reviews.

You can choose to play in Tournament or Minigame Frenzy mode. Tournaments can have two, four or six stages, depending on your choice. Each stage will be made up of three rounds involving different mini-games. Apart from the three rounds, at the end of each stage you'll also be able to wager your current points and take part in the Fuzion Frenzy round—a frantic free-for-all to collect the most number of orbs.

If joining a tournament isn't your cup of tea, you can always choose to play one of the mini-games. Frankly, this is what I prefer doing, because a number of the mini-games are truly enjoyable and I'd rather keep playing them than some randomly selected game in the tournament. This is where the developer could have really improved on the game, because it would be great if you could customize the tournaments with the games of your choice.

After selecting either Tournament or

Minigame Frenzy mode, it's time for you to pick your player. You have six choices: Dub, Samson, Geena, Zak, Naomi and Jet. It doesn't really matter who you choose because they don't have different strengths or specialties. And as I already mentioned, they're not exactly cute or attractive—the developer went for a goofy (or funky) futuristic look. One reviewer said that the characters remind him of Gelflings—remember them from the Dark Crystal movie?

You'll quickly get over the looks of the characters, however, when you start playing the games. The games are up to four players, and of course it's more fun when you're playing with your family or friends. Even if you're playing alone, however, the computer takes care of the other players, and they can be irritatingly difficult to beat in some games.

You won't complain about not being able to do much in Fuzion Frenzy. Some games have you splatting bugs, collecting tokens, catching glitter, creating pyrotechnics and passing around bombs. You get to ride jet boats, ice cars, bump cars, laser-trailing rocket ships and even tanks.

One of my favorites is Sumo.

I've played this game with my wife Ellen and her brother Eric. Special thanks to Leo Magno for lending a controller, hehe. Remember those Atlas spheres or roller cages from American Gladiators? Just as in real-life sumo, you have to knock your opponents out of the circle, except here you're all in roller cages and the circular platform you're playing on keeps getting smaller as the game progresses.

Another entertaining game is Rude Food, where you splat bugs and try to rack up the most points. It's a frantic chase as you run and hop around trying to get at the army of bugs. Be careful though, because you also have to defend your giant burger. If your burger gets eaten up, you lose.

Victim is also a wickedly fun game—you pass around a bomb like a hot potato and the one who's holding the bomb when time expires gets blown to smithereens. Let me rephrase that—you chase other players and press the "B" button to attack them, transferring the bomb. You then run like hell and use the escalators while the player with the bomb chases you.

Of course, while Fuzion Frenzy has 45 mini-games, many of them are variations of different types. For example, aside from Rude Food, you have different games that also involve splatting bugs. Then you have different types of races, tank battles and variations of Rhythm—a mini-game which is basically Dance Dance Revolution.

Speaking of music, Fuzion Frenzy also hits the right note with its soundtrack. This is the kind of techno stuff that fits right in with the futuristic setting. The sound effects are also good, what with all the explosions and yells. The characters don't talk much, but you do hear taunts during

FUZION/B11

Penalties vs virus makers should be consistent

By Erwin Lemuel G. Oliva

PENALTIES against virus creators should be more consistent to dissuade activities that had been causing damage to computers worldwide, a consultant for a European anti-virus firm said Thursday.

"Around the world, sentencing of virus creators (who would often plead guilty) vary from 20 months in prison to doing community service," said Graham Cluley, senior technolo-

gy consultant for anti-virus firm Sophos Plc.

Cluley cited the case of David Smith, the US-based programmer who created and disseminated the Melissa virus, who was sentenced to 20 months in prison for causing \$80 million worth of damage to computers worldwide.

The \$80-million total was the cost related to the time exhausted to clean the virus off affected computers. But US prosecutors had attempted to

swing a sentence of 10 years in prison for Smith, and a fine of \$150,000.

Smith was arrested in April 1999 after he was linked to spreading the Melissa virus through the Internet on March 26. He was the first person ever prosecuted for spreading a computer virus.

"Virus creation is a relatively new cybercrime," Cluley noted, citing another case involving a Welsh virus creator who recently pleaded guilty

PENALTIES/B11



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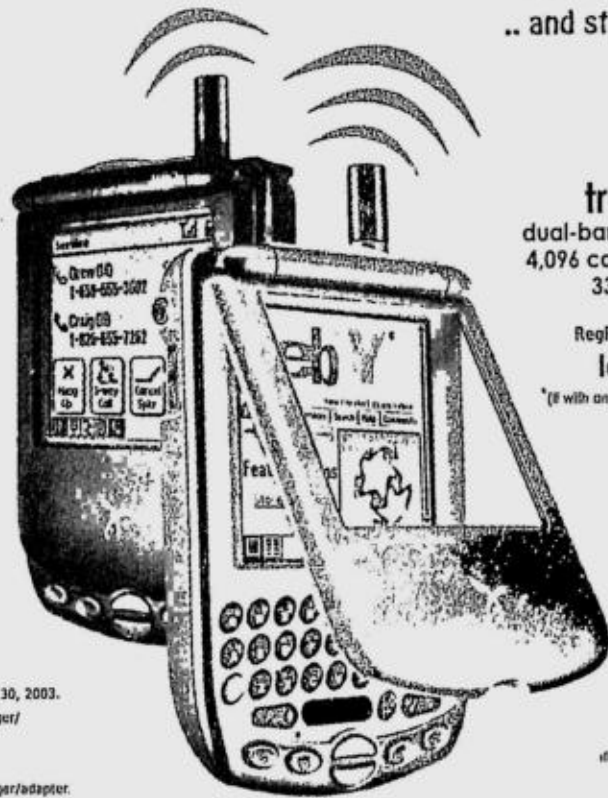
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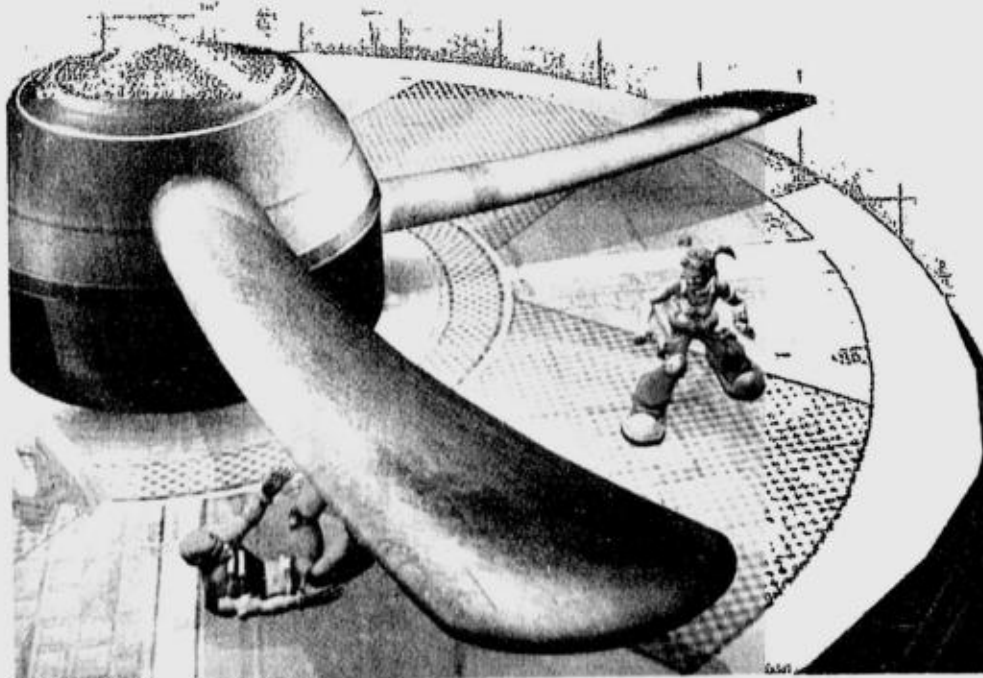
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NEW STRATEGIES

How can RP achieve rapid growth?

By Dennis M. Arroyo
Contributor

TODAY'S consensus in economics is that economic growth—in the Philippines as well as in the world—does not make the poor poorer but makes the rich even more rich.

High growth, however, really does raise the living standards of the poor, as shown by many studies.

The Philippines is mired in poverty in large part because of slow growth. Periods of fast growth just come in spurts: think of it as a jeepney whose engine often stalls on the road.

Hence, there is a dire need for rapid, sustained growth and Plan 747 aims to do just that.

Plan 747 calls for a 7-percent annual growth for seven years, starting in mid-2003.

This piece will strive to explain Plan 747, the new strategy of the Macapagal administration under new Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri and the source for the article is a speech delivered recently by Speaker Jose de Venecia.

Plan 747's target looks steep, but it is par for the course in other Asian countries. In the 1980s, South Korea boomed with a 9.1-percent growth, Taiwan with 8.8 percent and Singapore with 7.3 percent. Malaysia and Thailand grew by 6.1 percent to 10.1 percent in the 1990s.

Doing the math, a growth rate of 7 percent will lift the average Filipino poor to middle class income in around 10 years. Malaysia's high growth had shrunk the ranks of the absolute poor from 18 percent in 1970 to only 2 percent in 1990.

Here then are the programs for fueling rapid growth.

World-class services

Plan 747 aspires to set up a world-class service sector, as more and more services are sold in the global market and the Internet economy. In fact, the META Group index puts the Philippines as the world's top source of knowledge workers.

The term refers to the pool of tech workers, senior managers and engineers. The country should thus promote information and communications technologies (ICT).

The country is already doing much back-office work for noted US companies like Andersen Consulting. Calls from Texas seeking technical support are handled by Filipinos north of Manila. By 2010, the demand for such outsourcing will hit \$180 billion, and the Philippines can find a niche in this market. The edge lies in the nation's supply of IT workers, English-fluent professionals and lower wage rates.

Decades ago the top export of the Philippines was copra. Today the leading sector, by far, is electronics. The nation manufactures laptops, digital signal processors and Pentium chips.

To push ICT further, Plan 747 recommends the creation of an Office of Information Technology under the Department of Trade and Industry. This office will coordinate public and private sector work to boost ICT education and the production of software and hardware.

The reservoir of ICT students will be expanded to attend to the global market. ICT investors will benefit from easier immigration rules.

Rent seeking

Plan 747 seeks to stir competition in local industries. A major drag on growth is the tendency of business to be politicized: the term for this "rent seeking," though people are more familiar with "crony capitalism."

The plan notes that, "Wherever politicians rather than markets control economic access, there we will always find special interests trying to gain control of this non-market power."

The government will thus try to cut back its power to award franchises, concessions and incentives. Doing so will decrease sources of corruption. To level the playing field, the state will discourage monopolies, and this includes steps similar to reforms in the power sector.

Promoting competition

Barriers to entry will be broken. The government will deal with restrictions in the fertilizer, pesticide and shipping industries. It will investigate the interconnection problem among telecom companies.

Part of the arsenal is the Interconnections Bill, which includes criminal penalties for

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As a result of these changes, companies worldwide are left with just one option to stay competitive and remain alive in the market—focus on their cus-

MAPPING THE FUTURE

Jocelyn G. delos Reyes



tomers.

The creation of the ISO 9001:2000, the latest version of the ISO 900 Series of Quality Management Systems, plays an integral part in ensuring that firms, whether dedicated to producing and selling goods or providing services to the customers, devote their business to quality and productivity with utmost regard to customers' needs and requirements.

The ISO 9001:2000 will replace the ISO 9001, ISO 9002, and ISO 9003 1994 series, which will be phased out by December 2003.

The process Model of the ISO 9001:2000 stresses the importance of customers' needs, but it also suggests that to achieve total customer satisfaction, top-management, together with all the people involved in every aspect of an organization's operations, must get involved and participate in the continual improvement of the Quality Management System (QMS). This is based on the Deming Cycle of Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA).

The ISO 9001:2000 is clearly an effective management tool

that any company cannot afford to do without. The benefits are priceless as it could save a company from losing its next customer. As the changing market demands quality products and services, the ISO 9001:2000 puts a company in the lead.

"Being ISO (9001:2000) certified gives you an advantage over competitors especially to those contractors who are not yet (ISO) certified. It will also be difficult for us to be not ISO 9001:2000 certified because most foreign clients are very particular about the contractor's quality standards," said Noel Ramonde, corporate development supervisor of EEI Corp., one of the largest construction companies in the country which

has been awarded the ISO 9001:2000 certification 2001.

The primary reason why companies opt to be ISO 9001:2000 certified is that they want to be known as a company that heralds quality standards. This image gives them the market lead as customers are made known of their loyalty to sell products or service of high quality.

But just as important as getting the customer's confidence is the substantial savings that ISO 9001:2000 certified companies get because of reduced errors in operations resulting in a decrease in operational costs.

In the Philippines, TÜV Product Service has certified more

than 300 companies. TÜV Product Service has certified the most number of companies according to the ISO 9001:2000 version including top companies such as: Customer Contact Center (C3)—the first ISO certified call center; National Kidney and Transplant Institute—the first ISO certified government hospital; United Container Corp.—one of the largest manufacturers of packaging materials; and EEI Corp.

(The author is a member of the Management Association of the Philippines and general manager of TÜV Product Service Asia Pacific Pte. Ltd. The MAP secretariat and the author may be reached via mapsec@globenet.com.ph)

In age of corporate reform, solo committees live on

NEW YORK—Sweeping new rules intended to improve corporate checks and balances after the Enron, Tyco and WorldCom debacles have not ended one of corporate America's oddest governance practices—the one-person committee.

Traditionally, companies have set up at least three board committees—to review auditing, compensation and the nominations of officers. The standard is to have at least three directors on each committee.

Not so at Viacom, First Data and some other well-known US companies, which still feature committees of just one. The practice remains even as investors and regulators demand more independence and expertise among directors, and more transparency in the way they oversee a company's affairs.

One of the reasons for the existence of committees, some of the companies argue, is that they perform administrative tasks, and are therefore created for operational efficiencies, as in the case of dispensing stock options.

"Any committee of one is not a committee," said Charles Elson, director of the Center for Corporate Governance at the University of Delaware. "I think a one-person committee violates the spirit of the deliberative process."

"The idea of a committee is consensus," he said. "Ideas are best shared with several board members. The more heads you have in a room, the better the policies that will be worked out. Discussion and dissent form ideas." The Council of Institutional Investors, a group of 130 pension funds managing about \$3 trillion in assets, agreed.

"It is something you don't expect in this day and age," Ann Yerber, a spokeswoman for the council, said. "It is not good governance ... and it is not something that we would support. Given what has happened in the last year, we hope it goes the way of the dinosaur."

Among the US companies with these anomalies as described in regulatory filings are: software maker Adobe Systems Inc., orthopedic device maker Zimmer Holdings Inc., and biotech Amgen Inc. and Chiron Corp.

Those are in addition to First Data Corp., a credit card payment processor, and Viacom Inc., the sprawling media company.

At least one major US company—Oracle Corp.—did away with its one-man "plan" committee, which was composed of chairman and chief executive Lawrence Ellison and was responsible for doling out stock options.

The committee "was reconstituted as an officer committee rather than a Board committee" a year ago, the company said in documents filed with the SEC.

Oracle said in a statement issued to Reuters that the one-man committee was "entirely for administrative convenience ... to handle routine option grants to non-executive employees." The board-level committee was eliminated after a change in Delaware corporate law allowed option grants to be authorized by an entity other than the board, Oracle added.

'Oversight' at first data

First Data has a one-person "oversight committee" composed of outside director Courtney Jones that helps the board "oversee transactions between the company and related parties to protect the interests of the company's shareholders," according to First Data's SEC filings.

ones, a former Wall Street banker, is also chairman of First Data's audit committee.

The oversight committee specifically reviews First Data's deals with eONE Global, a sort of payment-technology incubator that was formed in late 2000 and is 75 percent owned by First Data, First Data spokesman David Banks said.

The committee met five times in 2001, as detailed in regulatory filings, and the deals reviewed by the committee were approved. The spokesman declined to provide any details about the transactions, or about the committee's 2002 activity.

Banks told Reuters the committee works in tandem with the audit committee in reviewing deals, adding that the company plans to have a new governance committee in place by the company's annual meeting this spring.

Mel's place

Viacom, whose properties include the MTV network and Paramount Pictures, has a large board with 18 directors, and one-man "Officers Nominating Committee"—currently occupied by Mel Karmazin, the company's president and chief operating officer.

A company spokesman said the arrangement was part of Karmazin's employment package.

The committee can "hire, elect, terminate, change positions, allocate responsibilities and determine non-equity compensation of officers and employees, other than the chairman, the chief executive officer and chief operating officer," according to filings. The one-person committee, however, is "subject to the powers of the compensation committee."

Also, the Karmazin committee can fire the CFO, controller, or general counsel. Any action the committee takes can be overturned by the board—but only if 14 or more directors agree to overturn the action.

Karmazin was granted the additional powers that are akin to those wielded by a CEO as part of the merger between Viacom and CBS, which closed three years ago this May.

Because CBS shareholders received no premium in the mega-deal, the shareholders wanted to ensure certain executive powers for Karmazin, so the "Officers Nominating Committee" was created and made part of his employment contract.

Sumner Redstone, whose private company National Amusements owns a majority of Viacom, is chairman and CEO of Viacom.

House of Adobe

Adobe Systems Inc. has a one-person "employee grant" committee. The single seat is occupied by Bruce Chizen, president and CEO.

The committee reviews and approves grants of stock options and restricted stock to non-officer employees. The committee held no meetings during fiscal 2001, according to Adobe's regulatory filings, and all actions were taken by "unanimous written consent."

Adobe declined to comment on the board's structure.

Also, Zimmer's board has a pair of one-person committees: governance and science and technology. The governance committee is made up of Regina Herzlinger, a Harvard Business School professor. She serves on four other corporate boards, including Schering-Plough and C.R. Bard Inc.

The science and technology committee is Dr. Augustus White III, a professor at Harvard Medical School, and internationally known expert on the spine.

A Zimmer spokesman did not return calls to elaborate on the company's board structure. *Reuters*

Reinsurance costs of Philippine non-life insurers escalate

By Reynaldo A. de Dios
Contributor

PHILIPPINE non-life insurers experienced great difficulty and escalating costs in completing their reinsurance programs for the year 2003.

The major international insurers after incurring substantial losses the past several years on risks insured against natural perils specifically earthquakes, typhoons and floods, have decided to exclude these perils from the traditional proportional and automatic reinsurance treaties.

Instead they have mandated that the Philippine insurers purchase a separate reinsur-

ance contract known as Excess of Loss Treaty to reinsure against the risks of natural perils.

In line with the principle of spreading risks, Philippine insurers are constrained to purchase reinsurance protection above their retention limits as the total net worth of the non-life sector is approximately P29 billion as of Dec. 31, 2001.

The Excess of Loss coverage is much more costlier and insurers have been assessed several times the cost of their previous reinsurance contracts.

In addition, the major reinsurers imposed stringent terms and conditions such as

the exclusion of terrorism and cyber risks including a cap on losses.

As a consequence, owners of mega valued properties will certainly be affected in terms of higher renewal premium rates for insurance against earthquakes and typhoons.

All of these developments are attributable not only to the huge insured losses incurred in the Sept. 11 terroristic incidents in New York but also because of the steep decline in the net worth of many brand-name reinsurers whose investments have been severely deteriorated due to slumping prices of equities in the global stock exchanges.

Consequently, the capacity of the reinsurers to accept risks have been reduced substantially and thus the law of supply and demand is now pervasive in the global reinsurance markets.

To reduce their premium expenditures, corporate owners particularly of high rise buildings and industrial complexes may consider assuming part of their risks by arranging higher deductibles in their insurance policies and should emphasize the concept of risk management by upgrading their loss prevention facilities and security measures to mitigate risks in their organizations to a minimum.

Small banks play big in niche markets

ASIAN Banker Research finds that there is more than enough room for small, focused banks in the region.

As the regulatory environment opens up, the norm is for financial institutions to compete as one-stop shops offering full-service banking.

However, there are some banks

opting to take the less-trodden path, rethinking their strategies to target niche markets such as small business banking or commercial lending.

Asian Banker Research is seeing increasing instances of financial players looking beyond broad-based presence to dominant positions in particular niche

markets.

One of these is India's state-run Allahabad Bank, which sees its future growth in the country's rural heartland rather than its cities, the target of most banks.

The bank is moving to exploit its vast network of village branches by intensifying consumer loans to rural areas.

Sixty percent of Allahabad's 1,914 branches are in rural and semi-urban areas and some 70 percent of India's one billion people still live in the countryside, representing a largely untapped market.

Household borrowings are only at a fraction of household income.

Bank offers five-year term investment

LEADING commercial bank International Exchange Bank (iBank) recently launched iTime Assure, a high-yield, five-year term investment instrument that allows depositors to get superior value for their savings.

For a minimum placement of P100,000, iTime Assure depositors can earn a fixed interest rate of 9 percent per annum, with monthly interest earnings credited to the depositors' iBank savings or checking account.

"iTime Assure is perfect for re-

tirees, pensioners and depositors who want to immediately enjoy the interest their money earns without waiting for the maturity but at the same time maintaining the value of their investments," explains iBank marketing center head Fred Guiao.

The introduction of iTime Assure comes at the heels of another high-yield investment instrument called iTime Plus which was embraced by iBank depositors when it was launched last year.

With its fixed interest rate of

10.25 percent net per annum, iTime Plus can make the minimum deposit of P62,000 become P100,991.47 in five years.

Guiao said the iTime Plus is primarily aimed at executives and professionals with sizeable liquid reserves and who are looking for higher return on their investments.

The interest earnings from both products are exempted from the standard 20-percent withholding tax, and the documentary stamp tax is shouldered by

iBank provided the deposit is maintained throughout the five-year term.

Both products come with free accident coverage of up to P5 million.

"These two products were designed in response to the growing market need for flexible, multi-featured high-yield instruments. An expanding portion of the market is looking for such beneficial placements, particularly during these times," Guiao concludes.

Outpatient center ties up with Asian chain

HEALTHWAY Medical Clinics, the country's chain of outpatient medical centers, is geared to bring more changes and significant advances in its overall healthcare delivery system in 2003 as it recently became a subsidiary of GenRx Healthcare.

The alliance between Healthway and GenRx is considered a major step in revolutionizing the country's outpatient healthcare industry.

GenRx's known global expertise in healthcare management is expected to ultimately enhance Healthway's competitiveness and capacity to deliver the best and most innovative medi-

cal services.

Foremost in their initial collaborative plans, Healthway will aggressively pursue its expansion programs through new branches in Ortigas, Makati as well as in the Manila area, which will enable Healthway to serve and satisfy the needs of an even larger number of clients and patients.

Subsequently, Healthway will also implement continuous enhancement and modification of its services to ensure increased customer satisfaction.

Meanwhile, GenRx Healthcare takes advantage of Healthway's advanced business model and

management approach by bringing it to its existing and future medical facilities in Asia as it aims to be the premier outpatient healthcare service provider in Hong Kong and China and in other Asian countries as well.

Healthway easily earned the trust and confidence of GenRx by maintaining excellent overall operations in its network of clinics, as validated by its ISO 9001:2000 certification.

Healthway offers a complete range of comprehensive healthcare services through clinical, laboratory and diagnostic facilities.

It also houses over 500 highly

qualified family medicine physician, specialists and subspecialists.

Some of its distinct services include special outpatient healthcards such as the Platinum PrivilegeCard and PrivilegeCard and special programs like the Women's Wellness Center, Pediatric Wellness Center, Kidney Clinic, Central Laboratory, among others.

Healthway's accessible branches are located on Ayala Avenue, Greenbelt, Binondo, SM City, Alabang Town Center, Festival Mall and at the Laguna Technopark. For inquiries, call 8923731 8140679 8140691.

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those not complying with service standards.

Another proposal is to restructure the National Telecommunications Commission, giving it more effective enforcement powers.

Airlines will be liberalized. The flag carrier's monopoly over Philippine air space dampens tourism. By switching to the "open skies" policy, various carriers can compete in bringing visitors to tourist attractions.

The state will liberalize trade

in sugar and corn. Industries that rely on agriculture, such as livestock raising and food processing, are uncompetitive by world standards. The main cause is the high cost of inputs like corn and sugar.

Plan 747 wants to replace import quotas on corn and sugar with tariffs. The money raised will in turn be used to benefit sugar and corn farmers.

Attracting investment

The government will widen the build-operate-transfer program to provincial and municipal projects. This allows the state to construct

infrastructure and buildings without busting the budget. Private companies will build the ports and highways, operate them and derive their profit. Then they later transfer ownership of the facilities to the government.

The state will build up economic zones to attract foreign investment:

- The Clark-Subic corridor for airports and sea ports.

- ICT parks in Metro Manila, particularly in or near top universities.

- The Northern Luzon quadrangle for agro-industrial estates

and for tourism—Laoag is a quick flight from Kaohsiung, Taiwan.

- The Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog corridor for both light and high-tech industries.

Finally, the government will turn the seas into highways. Investors are not interested in the shipping industry, so the vessels are getting old and shipping rates are high. A proposed shipping modernization law will take out profit limits and stir competition in ports and cargo handling. Comments to darroyo@philonline.com

Upbeat annual meet fade to memories

Activist turned entrepreneur promotes Pinoy well-being

NEW YORK—The days of corporate annual meetings as upbeat affairs with athletes and movie stars paraded around the room and executives pointing to sky-high stock prices are fading memories.

This year, as both springtime and annual meeting season approaches, shareholders and executives will gather in hotels, convention halls and even high school gyms to meet, greet and exchange pleasantries. Or in some cases, unpleasanties.

"These are serious times for boards and directors," said Ric Marshall, chief executive of The Corporate Library, a specialized investment research company. "Companies are going to be under the microscope from every side."

Even freebies—and some company literature—are falling out of fashion with the economic downturn. Last year, EMC Corp., a data storage company, decided not to hand out its glossy annual reports at its meeting, choosing instead to give out 16-page pamphlets.

"There is a sense the good times have passed," said Scott Klinger, co-director of corporate accountability at Responsible Wealth, a Boston-based shareholder activist group.

Klinger attends about a half dozen meetings each year and sees investors "beginning to ask a lot more challenging questions" after three years of stock market declines.

Scandals

Not only did the stock market drop again last year—the blue-chips lost about 17 percent—but the public was fed a steady diet of scandals ranging from accounting frauds to conflicts of interest and oversized compensation packages.

Typically, though, the working part of these meetings is dry, parliamentary procedure such as passing resolutions and counting shareholder votes. And the boilerplate corporate update from the chief executive doesn't provide nearly as much excitement

as a fiery lecture from the occasional irked shareholder or special interest group.

Do the twist

Among the issues that will be brought up at meetings this year are proposals calling for more analyst independence at Morgan Stanley, Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. and Goldman Sachs Group Inc., according to the Investor Responsibility Research Center, based in Washington, DC.

Religious groups, unions and state pension funds are also calling on companies including Dow Chemical Co., Weyerhaeuser Co. and Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. to separate the jobs of chief executive and chair, said IRRRC director of governance research Carol Bowie.

Stock options and compensation are also high on the agenda, Bowie said. She said she "suspects there will be attention paid to these issues" with "boards looking to get back into good graces of the small investor." Whether that will lead to real reform is another matter, most experts said.

Better times are likely to be had at the annual meeting of Wal-Mart Stores Inc., known for attracting many of its most devoted investors and employees. Held in the Bud Walton Arena on the campus of the University of Arkansas, the company's meetings have long been part revival meeting, part pep rally and part Hollywood extravaganza.

How rowdy is the event? The most recent one had supermodel Cindy Crawford lead a cheer spelling out the company's name, which involved a call for bottom shaking and twisting when the cheer arrived at the hyphen in Wal-Mart's name.

While Wal-Mart paid for 3,400 of its workers to fly, drive or catch a bus to the meeting, others are less accommodating.

Farmer Bros. Co., an investment company that started out as a food service specialist,

JEAN Paul Sartre said that "man does not have a human nature; he only has a history."

If one were to sum up the life of Albert M.G. Garcia, this philosophy very well explains the kind of person that he has become, a man who is always imbued with the desire to help others, especially the less privileged.

Garcia's early childhood and first schooling was in Madrid, Spain during the Franco socialist era and no doubt dinner table conversations subconsciously influenced and contributed to his formative and growing years.

As a young man back in the Philippines, he would accompany his lawyer father who represented the people from San Simon and Candaba, Pampanga, leaving strong imprints on life's inequalities between the rich and the poor.

While a student at De La Salle in the late '60s, he was an avowed activist, joining rallies and demonstrations against the social injustices, taking his share of truncheon bruises and tear gas inhalation. He had to leave the country the week after Marcos lifted habeas corpus.

Despite the fact that Garcia spent more than 25 years of his life in other countries, his outlook, however, never changed.

From the time he landed in Australia on Sept. 29, 1971—the date clearly imprinted in his mind—Garcia has taken on a multitude of jobs to survive, from waiter, dishwasher, assembling fire extinguishers, supermarket stock boy, clerk, newspaper delivery boy to being an account director in an advertising agency, marketing manager of a cruise company, managing director of retail chain to president and CEO of a food manufacturing company.

In 1976, however, he put up his own companies, Garsworth

Marketing Australasia Pty Ltd and Philippine Food Products Pty Ltd, an international trading company dealing with consumer products. He imported South East Asian food (Thai, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Korean, Filipino, Malaysian, Chinese) to Australia.

Garcia is directly attributed to have influenced and changed the culinary direction of Australia as a consequence of the food imports for 30 years.

Interest in sports

Among other endeavors—from 1995 to 1998—on a consultancy capacity, he was adviser to the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) chair on international sports policy and development and was also head of the PSC International Desk.

This strong interest in sports stems from his being an all-around athlete during his student days. Garcia played for the Philippine National Football Team from 1966-1971, making his country proud with international goals against Burma and China.

De La Salle inducted him to the Sports Hall of Fame—Football in 1997. The PSC has likewise given him recognition by awarding him "Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Sports" and "Outstanding Contribution to the Development of Philippine Sports."

In the same manner that his sociopolitical environment influenced his outlook in life, Garcia's sports inclination has contributed to his strong personal belief that wellness plays a very important role in the quality of life of a person.

Garcia has practical industry experience in a number of fields i.e. travel and tourism, water management, food and agriculture, property development, commodities, consumer

products, management consultancy, advertising and promotions and even cinema and entertainment.

With his involvement in these industries, Garcia gained professional competence in various areas—marketing and administration, consulting skills training, international consultancy, high-level liaison with governments, import and export marketing, international trading (Australasia and Southeast Asia), product development and consumer marketing.

Garcia assists foreign companies do business in the Philippines and South East Asia and helps Philippine companies tap export markets in the Asean.

Garcia is also sharing his wealth of professional experience through the academe. He is formulating courses on Marketing to South East Asia and Indo China for the CCE—Ateneo Graduate School of Business.

Comes home

Seven years ago, he decided to settle once again in the Philippines on a more permanent basis.

But while his hands are full of various involvements, from all indications he never veered away from his core interest and lifestyle ideology. His company, Garsworth Marketing Inc., is engaged in exclusive marketing of C-Lium Fibre, a registered trademark of a fiber supplement and considered the "Rolls Royce of Fibers" and the "Mother of all Herbs."

What has a fiber supplement got to do with the cause he used to espouse in his younger days, especially that of a more equitable sharing of nature's bounty?

Garcia is quick to answer that his objective of promoting the well being of people through C-Lium Fibre is consistent with his

personal philosophy of keeping oneself in good shape, an attitude he has nurtured over the years as an athlete.

Garcia is so passionate about the benefits of C-Lium that he is not worried about its relatively higher price.

Now that it is already in the market, his aim is to reach more people, make them realize the benefits of increased well being from regular and daily C-Lium Fibre intake. And as more and more people become aware of its benefits, then his company will likewise achieve growth in the market.

Garcia cites its competitive advantage over other products and declares: "No other fiber supplement in the market is able to provide all the benefits that C-Lium Fibre delivers. It is made from psyllium husks which is an excellent source of soluble fiber. It has no additives, no preservatives, no chemicals, no side effects, no artificial sweeteners, just pure wholesome 100-percent organic plant material. It's nature's way of providing fiber to our bodies."

"For me, what is most fulfilling is that I am in a position to provide greater well being to Filipinos by encouraging increased food fiber intake with C-Lium Fibre. I would like to be remembered as the person who eliminated constipation from the Philippines. It is just unfortunate that I cannot likewise eliminate political constipation."

As an entrepreneur, Garcia may have had unpleasant experiences dealing with what he refers to as "bureaucrazy" but this does not dampen his goals for C-Lium Fibre, revealing plans to position the product in the global marketplace via e-commerce. Eventually, he would also like his employees to take over,

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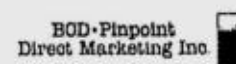
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Aries Espinosa, Editor

Filipino named one of Asia's top 10 creative directors

LEADING regional advertising magazine Campaign Brief Asia has named local creative director David Guerrero as the eighth highest ranked creative in Asia.

Guerrero is chair and executive creative director of leading local agency BBDO Guerrero Ortega, which was separately ranked in the top 20 agencies in Asia for the second year running.

The rankings, which are compiled annually, measure success in the world's top creative award shows. The magazine lists these as Cannes, D&AD, Clio, the One Show, Adfest and Media.

Topping the rankings for this year was

Suthisak Sucharittanonta, the ECD of BBDO Bangkok. In all, four out of the top 10 works at BBDO agencies around the region.

As BBDO's Jos Ortega puts it: "BBDO continues to stand for excellence in creativity. What we call 'the work, the work, the work.' We passionately believe that's the best way to build brands and gain lasting success for our clients."

BBDO is the third largest advertising agency worldwide. It is currently the Ad Age Global's network of the year and has been named the leading creative network in the world by the independent Gunn Report.



ST. LUKE'S KICKS OFF SAP IMPLEMENTATION

St. Luke's Medical Center recently started implementation of SAP's financial and logistics solutions, according to company executives. SAP Philippines and implementation partner Smits Inc. target project completion in March. The new system, according to SAP Philippines managing director Ian Black (5th from left) will automate and streamline the hospital's financial accounting, materials management and procurement

processes. Shown are (from left) Smits vice president for operations Romeo Saldua, St. Luke's vice president for materials management Daisy Cuevas, St. Luke's senior vice president for finance Edith Simeon, St. Luke's president and CEO Jose Ledesma, Black, SAP Philippines industry sales manager John Redor III, and Smits solutions consultant Zaldy Martin.



BAYANTRADE HOSTS TOSHIBA'S PROCUREMENT PORTAL

To support its objective of being 'Net-competitive' and process-efficient, Toshiba Information Equipment Philippines (TIP) has launched its own procurement portal hosted by BayanTrade. The portal enables automation of TIP's purchasing processes, gives the company access to a wide variety of commodities, and facilitates communication with e-Marketplace suppliers. Shown are (from left) Lester

Hernandez, BayanTrade strategic business unit officer, Romil Acosta, BayanTrade director for sourcing, Benedicto Abella Jr. TIP procurement officer, Hermiland Tanhuco, TIP information systems manager, Rose Ann Hernandez, TIP purchasing supervisor, Maria Marissa Marinas, TIP procurement officer, and Maria Cecilia Ancheta, procurement officer.



VERITAS DATA PROTECTION SEMINAR

Veritas Software Corp., the leading storage software provider, recently conducted a seminar on data protection and recovery for growing business needs. The seminar highlighted the need for protection and availability of critical databases, using the storage network for backup and for integration while reducing the cost of storage. Al dela Cruz, sales manager of Veritas Software Philippines, discusses how Veritas products can safeguard the integrity of all corporate data within the industry's leading open systems platforms and databases for fast, reliable, enterprise-wide backup and recovery.

The Tel Aviv Trio makes RP debut

IN ITS effort to contribute towards the strengthening of cultural cooperation and exchange between the Philippines and Israel, the Embassy of Israel, in cooperation with Air Philippines, Mandarin Oriental Manila, Arts Council of Cebu and the Cultural Affairs Committee of Dumaguete City will host a series of enchanting music by the renowned "Tel Aviv Trio".

The Tel Aviv Trio - an internationally acclaimed ensemble—was founded under the auspices of The Jerusalem Music Center in 1998. The trio is deemed as the last young artists mentored by the great vi-

olinist Isaac Stern. The trio then won several awards and gained international recognition around the world as well as performing concerts in the most prestigious concert halls in France, Italy, Spain, England, Russia, Yugoslavia, Qatar and in the near future in Norway, Denmark, Germany and Austria.

From Jan. 10 to 15, the Tel Aviv Trio will visit the Philippines and perform a series of recitals and master classes in the Captain's Bar, Mandarin Oriental in Manila (invitations only), City Sports Club in Cebu City (Jan. 11) and the Luce Auditorium-Siliman University in Dumaguete City (Jan. 13).



IBM ENABLES BINANGONAN TO GO HIGH-TECH

The Municipality of Binangonan, Rizal, signs up with IBM for its computerization project together with Systems & Plan Integrator & Development Company (SPIDC). Shown are, from left, lawyer Renato Director, Binangonan legal officer, Dan

David, country manager for enterprise storage group, IBM Philippines, Cesar Ynares, Binangonan Municipal Mayor, engineer Julle Cunanan, SPIDC general manager, and Rosalina Piguig, Binangonan municipal treasurer.



MCDO'S 'LOLO' DOES IT!

Richard Irvine, executive creative director for Leo Burnett, receives with pride the most prestigious Platinum Award for the ultra-popular TV commercial, McDonald's 'Lolo', in the recently concluded Araw Values Awards held Dec. 4 at the Rockwell Tent in Makati. With Irvine are McDonald's Vice President for Marketing Lelia Hernandez (left) and Edsel Tolentino, group creative director. McDonald's thanks the rest of

the Leo Burnett team composed of Alvin Tecson (copywriter), Elvin Julian (art director), Sue Ann Mallig-Nolito (account director), and Sheila dela Cuesta (associate creative director) and Mike dela Cuesta (senior art director). The McDonald's 'Lolo' TV commercial has proven to be an advertising phenomenon, as it garnered Catholic Mass Media Awards, and the Pana Values Award for 2002.



MOA SIGNING FOR EPS

A memorandum of agreement was signed Dec. 16 between PostalBank and Rural Bankers' Association of the Philippines (RBAP) regarding a correspondent banking agreement with rural banks for PostalBank's Electronic Payment System (EPS) Remittance Service Program. Signing the MOA are president Jerry B. Coloma of RBAP and president Juanito A. Magno for PostalBank. Witnessing the signing are Delfin P. Narvaez, RBAP past president, lawyer Pablo LR Ronquillo, RBAP consultant, PostMaster General Nicasio P. Rodriguez Jr. and lawyer Victor V. Tantoco, PPSB chief legal adviser.

PNU celebrates 11th year

THE PHILIPPINE Normal University is celebrating the 11th anniversary of its conversion into a university Jan. 8 to 15 with the theme sharpening PNU's Focus for Teacher Education. Dr. Nilo L. Rosas, the president of PNU, will lead the university week celebration. The celebration includes academic and non-academic activities and will be highlighted by strategic planning workshops and the launching of the Master of Educational Technology Program at the Makati City Hall on Jan. 16. PNU had recently celebrated its 101st foundation anniversary as a teacher training institution in September 2002. PNU was established in September 1901 by the American government and the first teachers of Filipinos were the Thomasites.

Speed matching for busy singles

MATCH.PH, a website catering to singles who want to meet other busy singles like them, will make January special. match.ph president Mary Ann Go, announces the "speed matching" every Thursday of January 2003. The first event was held Jan. 9. "Speed Matching" is popular in Western countries. Each "date" lasts only eight minutes, so one person can meet up to eight persons all in one evening. There are 8 men and 8 women, each paired up and sitting on separate tables. After the eight minutes of getting to know that "date", everyone switches tables until every participant has met the others. At the end of the event, each participant will score who among his/her dates interest him/her the most. If there is a match, numbers are exchanged. Any single 18 years old and above can join. E-mail admin@match.ph or call 0917-5323299 for details.

Product FILES

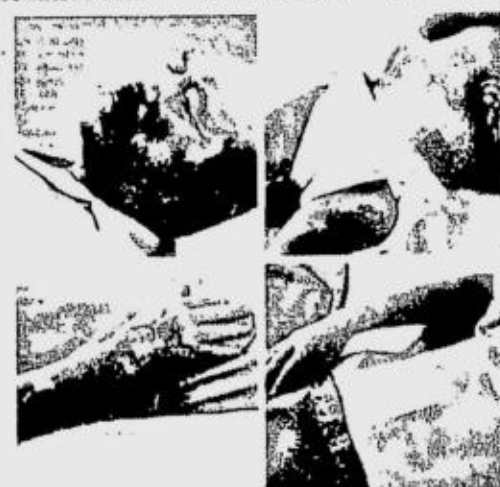
3M surgical tapes set trend for gentle, effective patient care

3M Company, one of the world's leading manufacturing companies with operations in more than 60 countries, sales in more than 200 countries with over 60,000 products for various markets, has a health care group that manufactures, among other innovative and useful products, a line of surgical tapes that have redefined patient care from the '60s to the present.

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curing regular and bulky dressings, tubings and immobilization. The newest in the 3M line is Transpore White Surgical Tape—light and handy yet has the amazing ability to secure dressing even on damp and wet skin—making it ideal for Asian climates.

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Micropore in the Philippines are Magwin Marketing for Metro Manila, Patient Care for Northern Luzon, and Berovan Marketing for Visayas/Mindanao. For more information, go to www.mmm.com.

Herbal medicine, wellness seminars

WELLNESS expert and holistic medicine practitioner Dr. Jaime Z. Galvez Tan will give two seminars on herbal medicine and health. The first seminar is on "An Introductory Course on the Uses of Philippine Medicinal Plants" scheduled on Jan. 11, and the second seminar is on "Wellness Exercises for Daily Living" scheduled on Jan. 18. Both seminars are from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. to be held at Norfil Building, 16 Mother Ignacia Avenue corner A. Rocas Avenue, Quezon City. For details and reservations, call Health Futures Foundation Inc. at 372-2187, or fax 413-8669, e-mail hfutures@edsamail.com.ph.

Upbeat annual meet fade to memories

From page C3

held its most recent meeting the day after Christmas.

Unprecedented scale

Other companies have ventured far from their headquarters—and their shareholders—for annual meetings.

Take Gap Inc., which is based in San Francisco but has held meetings in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and near its distribution centers in Gallatin, Tennessee, and Fishkill, New York.

Qwest Communications International Inc., based in Denver, held its meeting last year in Dublin, Ohio; Morgan Stanley last year moved its event from the New York City area to London, where a spokesperson said it had a "slightly smaller" attendance.

"We wanted to demonstrate we had a global shareholder base and a global employee base," the spokesperson said. This year's meeting, however, will be held in the United States.

In some cases, Klinger said, companies have moved meetings to "places that are harder to reach, under the ruse of moving meetings closer to shareholders."

At Tyco International Ltd's 2002 meeting, held at the Fairmont Hamilton Princess in Bermuda, only 48 people attended, including its auditors and 11 board members. The meeting lasted 40 minutes.

In spite of a truckload of scandals and the indictment of former Chair Dennis Kozlowski, Tyco's turnout this year may not be any bigger. But others likely will, experts said.

"Shareholders on every level—both the big institutions and individual shareholders—are going to be really watching what's going on this year," Marshall said.

"I think there will be a new level of activism when we actually get to the general meetings, but even just the proxy filings are going to look and feel different this year than they ever have before on a scale that's unheard of," he said. **Reuters**

Card network ends year with top bankers

MASTERCARD International held another Yuletide bash in appreciation of the support of its growing family of member banks. The celebration marked another year for the company as a leading payment brand in the country.

With most of the country's top banks on its invitation roll, the MasterCard Christmas at the Tavern on the Square became a virtual assembly of prominent industry personalities.

Prominent personalities that came to the affair were BPI's Aurelio Montinola III, who also sits as the Vice Chair of MasterCard Asia-Pacific's Board of Directors; Nina Aguas, Citibank Country Business Manager; Peter Yeates, Senior VP, Personal Financial Services of HSBC; Cynthia Valenzuela, President of Metrobank Card Corporation; Jose Luis Yulo, Jr., Chair and President of One Card International; Rolando Tanchanco, President and CEO of Philam Savings Bank; Oscar Biazon, Senior VP and COO of RCBC Bankard; Jose Nuñez Jr., President and Chair of Security International Card Corporation; Ajay Kanwal, Senior VP and Head of Card Services of Standard Chartered Bank; and Dan Ibarra, Senior VP for Mobile Commerce of Smart Communications, Inc.

In full force were other top



JUDITH Dayrit (extreme right) of MasterCard with the Citibank team (from left) Julie Phua, Gina Ordonez, Cecille Fonacier, Nina Aguas and Patrick Cheng

bank executives such as Teresita Tan, Josephine Ocampo and Marion Kohchet-Chua of BPI; Cecille Fonacier and Bea Tan of Citibank; Cristina Balingit, Tess Silbor and Edmund Chan of Equitable-PCI Bank; James Benoit and Claire Ann Yap of HSBC; Rey Banico and Jasmin Buñag of Metrobank; Annie Umali, Rina Millari and Myla Gonzales of Philam Savings Bank; Elizabeth Legarda and Irene Taylo of RCBC; Alex Ilagan of Security Bank Corporation; Gerry Tiamson, Jerreza Torre Villas, Jacqueline Fernandez and Corinne Go-Astiller of Standard Chartered Bank.

Also hosting the occasion were the rest of the MasterCard family in the country—Judith Dayrit, Director for Marketing & Member Relations; Anton Corro, Technical and Operations Manager; and Rochelle Leyba, Member Relations Representative.

With approximately 25,000 MasterCard, Cirrus and Maestro members worldwide, MasterCard serves consumers and businesses, both large and small, in 210 countries and territories. MasterCard is a leader in quality and innovation, offering a wide range of payment solutions in the virtual and traditional worlds.



CINDY Valenzuela, Metrobank Card Corp. president and Poch Villa-Real, MasterCard VP and country manager of the Philippines



AURELIO Montinola III, BPI senior executive vice president and Judith Dayrit, MasterCard director for marketing and member relations

Activist turned ...

From page C3

own and manage the company.

But while there is that desire to help uplift the living conditions of many Filipinos, Garcia, however, is not blind to the country's weaknesses and inadequacies. Having been away from the country, he has his observations, though, including the national tendency to be too theoretical, the lack of unity, less-than-optimum utilization of manpower and even business opportunities, lack of self-realization especially among the underprivileged.

Making RP competitive

Despite all these, Garcia is resolved "to be part of the process of making Philippine businesses more competitive particularly within the Asean and the Pacific

region" while at the same time, pursue other interests.

As the country is besieged by a host of problems, the former political exile believes that the Philippines can truly become one of Asia's great economies if only we can get our act together. There is no greater proof, he says, that the Filipino is a productive worker, as evidenced by the global communities and economies, their adopted and host countries, where expatriate Filipinos are positively and clearly contributing to their advancement. Because of this, Garcia believes there is no reason why Filipinos cannot work for the advancement and upliftment of their own homeland.

(For information on C-Lium Fibre, call 524-6549 and 5248146.)



SECURITY International Card Corp.: (standing from left) Raffi Simpa, Detdet Aruego, Jackie Papa (seated from left) Grace Perez, Marge Martinez, Daniel Yu, Belen Lim and EVP and GM Alex Ilagan



BPI Cards Team: (from left) Jojo Ocampo, Marion Kohchet-Chua, Gene Mercado, Mayet Gonzalez, Lap Azores and Gigi Paguntalan

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"WOODEN Trellis III"

A young artist in bloom

By Jerome B. Gomez
Contributor

AT 20 and without formal training in the visual arts, Camille de la Rosa paints landscapes without betraying she has had only three years of experience in negotiating the Impressionistic style that her late father, Ibarra, had become famous for through his landscapes and cityscapes.

The elder De la Rosa died in 1998, also the year the daughter started to paint. "Hindi naman niya ako tinuruan," the fresh-faced, bright-eyed artist says. As a kid, she just kept churning out drawing after drawing that used to fill the walls of the De la Rosa household in Mandaluyong. He would give her a peso for every painting; he would never correct her. "He would just let me do what I want."

After three years and six solo exhibitions—mostly sold-out affairs—De la Rosa

not only creates output that now fetches figures that shame her dad's one-peso tip. Her works—garden landscapes peaceful and happy and devoid of the customary youthful angst, very much like the artist herself—have awes such collectors as Lisa Cojuangco, Nina King and bookstore magnate Tess Suplico. Cojuangco even flew her to Negros so that she could interpret a Cojuangco garden there.

Now, the young artist can tell the hints of differences between her works and her father's.

"When I was starting, *kamukhang-kamukha nung sa daddy ko 'yung works ko* because I really idolized him," says the young artist who started out with oil and pastel on sandpaper. "Now I can say *na nakahiwalay na 'ko sa daddy ko*."

Proof that she is coming to her own is her 38-piece collection of new, mostly large works that will be on exhibit beginning Jan. 17 at the Art Conservatory. The artist says her usually dominant greens have given more canvas space to stronger colors, a change that came with her readiness to complement her brushstrokes occasionally with the more forceful stroke of a finger.

The two-week show is still abloom with gardens culled from memories of her travels and inspired by photographs from the growing art library of her mother cum manager, Ethel Dimacuja, a former Humanities professor at the Technological Institute of the Philippines. While her father's works inspire her to paint landscapes, the artist says she also feels she must hew close to the traditional before venturing into other subjects and forms.

She is hardworking, painting seven days a week, and rarely goes out, except when she has to bring her beagle Cyrus to dog shows. She is, however, slowly opening her doors to other territories. She's squeezing in a few portraits in her schedule, and she's slowly introducing human figures in her gardens here and there. Portraits first, maybe abstracts later. "*Basta lahat pupunta-han ko*," she says.

Camille de la Rosa's "Gardens in Rhapsody" runs on Jan. 17-31 at the Art Conservatory, 1782 corner N. Garcia St. (formerly Reposo) and Kalayaan Ave., Makati City. Call 895-0753/1771 local 1101 or 1102.

Camille de la Rosa continues to do her late father Ibarra proud, but she is slowly coming to her own



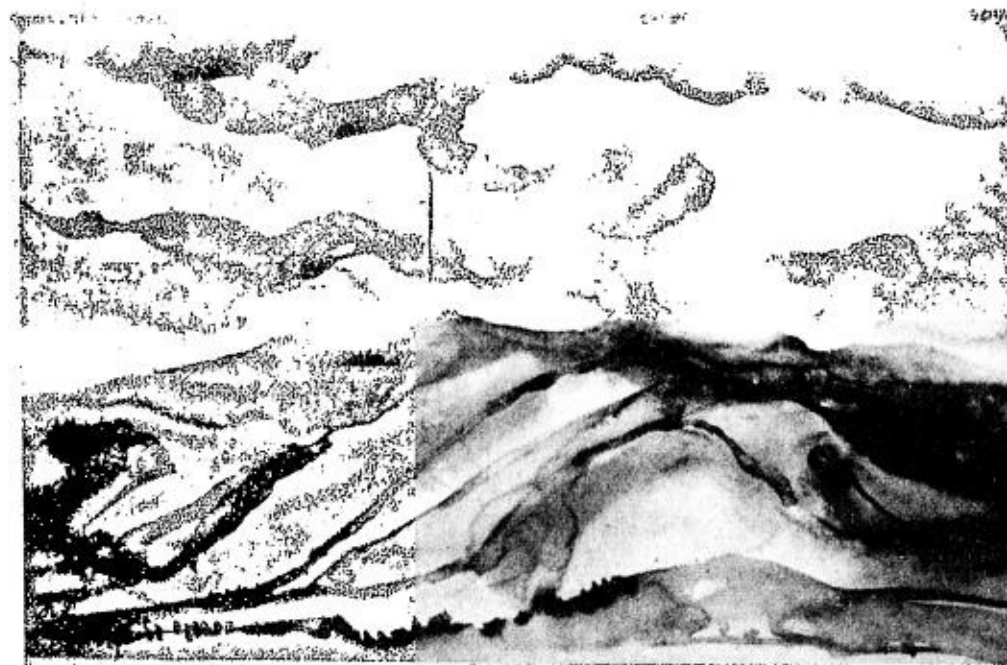
"TROPICAL Garden"



"MIDSUMMER Mood"



"GARDEN Shade"



"LANDSCAPE" by Manansala

A birthday tribute to Manansala

From page D1

him like a long lost friend. "Matagal na tayong hindi nakita," Onglepho remembered Manansala saying. "Bata ka pa rin, pero ako, 'di pa rin tumatanda."

Onglepho said they talked about Manansala's first one-man show in 1951, where

no one was willing to pay P20 for any of the 27 works and the artist did not want to scale down his price for P12. The old man told Onglepho that he had to make his own frames because he could not afford the extra expense.

But painting was his life, as Juan Luna before him, Onglepho said. Manansala admired Luna very much for the deeply felt emotion of his works. "Unfortunately he died too young, and is not as easily recognized internationally," Manansala told Onglepho.

Manansala, Onglepho said, had wanted to live 10 years longer. "Marami pa akong gagawin," the master reportedly said.

Like Manansala, Onglepho has persevered in his art and has built his own market of avid collectors. For the show, he presents a new collection of *barong-barong* and seascapes, done in colored pencil on rice paper.

Malang, for his part, has been inspired by Manansala's example of discipline. He may have painted a thousand gouache paintings of women, but Malang still treats every canvas as if he's doing it for the first time, with curious, childlike imagination and instincts that are the envy of many.

"The Birthday Show: A Homage to Manansala" formally opens on Jan. 22, 6 p.m., at the Asia Art Gallery (6/L Shangri-La Plaza). Guests of honor include Rep. Joaquin Chipeco, Sophia Cuyegkeing and Yasmin S. Cuenca. The show runs until Feb. 3. Call 632-1433.



"VENDOR" by Malang

Alcazaren at West; group show in Ali Mall

JUAN Alcazaren holds an exhibit of his latest large-scale paintings at the West Gallery, Art Walk, 4/L SM Megamall A, Mandaluyong City, Jan. 16-28. The exhibit is dubbed "I Love New Works." Call 634-1284.

FOUR painters—Eusebio R. Dy, Jaime S. Navarro, Luzviminda H. Santillan and Fernando B. Sena—are holding a group show of landscapes, still lifes and human interest subjects in oil and acrylic on Jan. 25 at the Saturday Group Gallery, Ali Mall, Cubao, QC. The exhibit will run until Feb. 28.

VISUAL ARTS

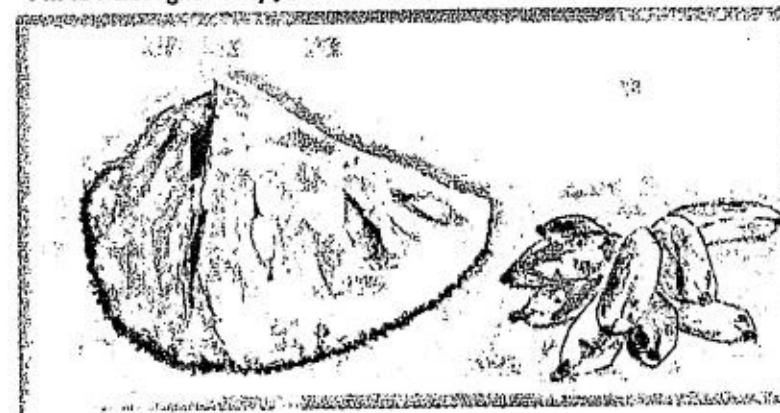


"MIMSY Borogrove" by Juan Alcazaren

GALLERIA Duemila presents the latest one-man show of Alfredo Rocas. "Landscape/Still Life" features the artist's small-scale still lifes and seascapes in oil and acrylic on canvas. The exhibit will open on Jan. 15 and will run until Jan. 31. Call 634-326, 633-6687 or e-mail duemila@info.com.ph.

THE CULTURAL Office of the People's Republic of China and the University of the Philippines' Jorge B. Vargas Museum are presenting "Chinese Celebrations of the New Year," featuring materials from the western provinces of China. The exhibit opens tomorrow and will run until Feb. 28. Call 928-1927 or 920-5301 local 7408.

EIGHTEEN artists hold an exhibit dubbed "Diversity in Artistry" at the Siglo XXI Art Studio of the Makati Shangri-la. Participating are Robert Balejadra, Ige Concepcion, Rafael Cusi, Jun Dulay Sr. with his sons Noel and Nik, Roberto Duldulao, Carlos Gabuco, Romeo Gutierrez, Wilson Ma, Jose Madrilejos, Renato Maglalar, Paul Mesina, Antonio Raymundo, Roland Rosacay, Roland Santos, Andy Urag and Al Perez. The exhibit runs until Jan. 31, on the 2/F Ayala Arcade, Makati Shangri-La, Ayala Avenue, Makati City. Call 724-347, 814-2567 or 717-0900.



"STUDY in Yellow" by Alfredo Rocas



JAIME S. Navarro, Fernando Sena, Luzviminda Santillan and Eusebio R. Dy with their exhibit paintings

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Philippine collections at Chicago's natural history museum

By Cynthia O. Valdes
Contributor

UNLIKE the Dutch and the English in the late 19th century, Americans did not know much about running a colony. Moreover, the Philippines, a far-away group of islands between the China Sea and the Pacific that she had acquired as a result of the Spanish-American war of 1898, was little known in the West.

In an article entitled "Field Museum and the Philippines," Bennet Bronson, curator of Asian Archaeology and Ethnology of the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago (1982), recounts that Philippine exhibits at the St. Louis (Missouri) Exposition of 1904 created a minor sensation when the American public was exposed for the first time to "magnificently costumed Bagobos" and "fierce-looking Bontocs." The zoo-like aspects of the display, though common in world fairs during those days, bothered a few thoughtful individuals who must have agreed with Mark Twain that "a free nation should have no colonies at all," in the first place.

Nonetheless, Americans wanted to know more about their newly acquired possession. Philanthropists in the Midwest, then enjoying a period of prosperity, were willing to fund expeditions. Through the Field Museum, funds were provided, in return, the museum agreed to mount a permanent Philippine exhibition on its premises.

Anthropologists and ethnographers set out to gather materials for museum collections during



THE AUTHOR (left) at the museum

which much attention was given to the study of "the mental and material culture... which included language, folklore, anthropometrics (physical measurements) of the tribes visited."

Today, the Field Museum has around 10,000 items obtained from the Philippines. These include textiles, personal ornaments, weapons, basketry, wooden carvings, trade ceramics, earthenware, household furnishings and utensils, musical instruments, small toys, betel chewing paraphernalia and other miscellaneous items.

Around 75% of these were collected in the field between 1907 and 1910. The rest were donated items, some of them by US soldiers who served in the Moro Wars during the early 1900s.

No longer an American colony, interest in the Philippines has waned considerably in the last half century. Long-time Chicago residents Isabel and Francisco Juan remember when they used to take their young children to view the Philippine exhibit at "Hall G" of the Field Museum of Natural History.

"Hall G" is no longer there. The Philippine artifacts are now in

storage. Located somewhere within the labyrinthine corridors of the museum, the storage rooms are aligned with steel racks and air-conditioned. The large items are remarkably preserved on the racks or in hangers and smaller and more fragile items kept in wooden drawers, all properly classified and neatly labeled. Special items are placed in a vault.

Haloed woman

At the heart of the Field Museum's Filipiniana holdings is an image of a seated and haloed woman. At five and a half inches high and weighing almost four pounds of solid gold, the statue, popularly known as the "Agusan Gold Image" has been called "The most spectacular find yet made in Philippine archaeology."

Dr. Bennet Bronson, long-time custodian of the gold statue, narrates the circumstances surrounding the discovery of the image:

"It is said to have been found in 1917 by an anonymous woman, probably of the Manobo tribe, while walking through a little frequented ravine in Agusan Province in the southern Philip-

pines."

After a series of narrow escapes from the melting pot for its commercial gold value, it came to the attention of Prof. H. Otley Beyer, acknowledged dean of Philippine archaeology who immediately recognized that its historical significance far outweighed its value as bullion. Beyer tried unsuccessfully to convince the American colonial government to purchase the statue for the National Museum in Manila.

Instead, three private individuals—Faye Cooper Cole, then Southeast Asian curator of the Field Museum; Shaler Matthews of the University of Chicago; and Mrs. Leonard Wood, wife of the governor-general of the Philippines—managed to raise the money for the purchase. The statue arrived at the Field Museum in 1922.

Filipino-made?

Bronson writes: "the statue is clearly a Hindu or Buddhist female deity... but... atypical by the standards of most Hindu-Buddhist artistic traditions, including that of ancient Java, to which it seems distantly to belong." Beyer thought that it could have been made in the Philippines by not necessarily expert Javanese miners engaged in working the placer gold deposits in the Agusan area.

The great Dutch historian, F.D. K. Bosch, suggested that the statue was atypical in style because it was fashioned by Filipinos. Bronson calls attention to the excellent metal-working tradition of the Manobos of Agusan. Examples of these were in fact displayed for a time at Hall G (Hall of Gems) at the Field Museum. ".....a Manobo artist in around A.D. 1100 might have been quite capable of producing the statue," concludes Bronson.



FAMOUS Agusan gold image

CYNTHIA VALDES

Since the time of Bronson's account (1975), a few collections with notable examples of outstanding local gold finds have been established in the Philippines. Best known of these is the pre-Hispanic gold collection of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas most of which have come from diggings in Surigao Province, attesting to a long-standing gold-working tradition in the Caraga region of northeastern Mindanao. It is no longer difficult to believe that the gold image of Agusan was indeed cast by native Filipinos.

New interest

The Philippine Consulate is enthusiastically leading efforts to rekindle interest in the Filipiniana manuscripts at Newberry Library, another Chicago institution with rich Philippine holdings (see PDI article by Ed Malaya). But there's more than that in Chicago. In the last few decades, the

Philippine collections at the Field Museum of Natural History have largely remained unknown and untapped except by visiting scholars.

A series of exhibitions accompanied by lectures of leading scholars in the various fields would do much to bring international attention to the Philippines. Much in the same way that the San Diego exhibition of artifacts retrieved from a shipwreck near Fortuna Island at the mouth of Manila Bay was held in many cities of the world including New York. Filipinos wherever they may now reside must continue to feel pride in their national heritage.

With more than 118,000 Filipinos in Chicago (according to the 2000 census) and newly emerging Asian studies programs in the Midwest, there should be no reason our rich Philippine materials should continue to slumber in storage in these institutions.

2003 Body Calendar in January Metro issue

METRO features today's top models, actresses and television hosts in the 2003 Body Calendar.

The first Metro Body Calendar was launched in 1998 on the suggestion of photographer Raymund Isaac, who had taken sexy photographs of show-biz celebrities.

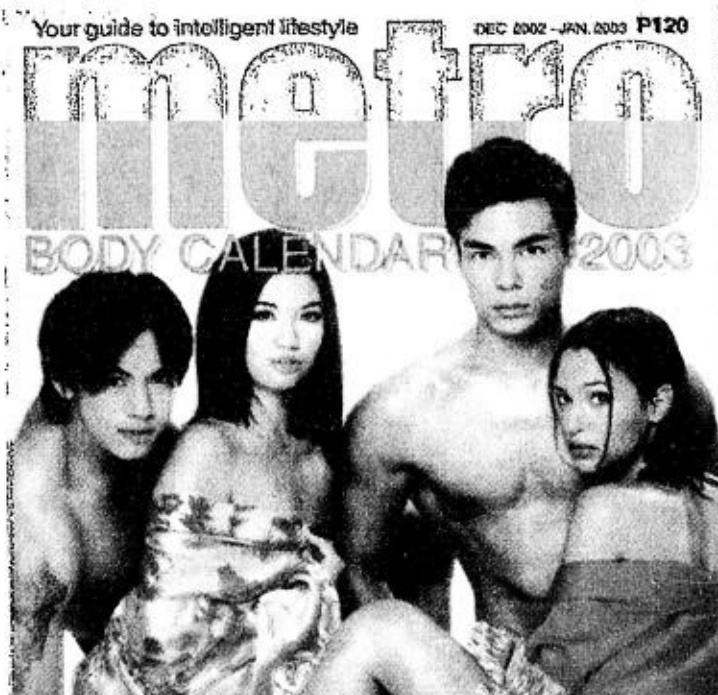
Metro editor Thelma San Juan said the Body Calendar was an opportunity for photographers to explore their art. This year, the calendar has a more glamorous and fashion feel. "We used models and TV hosts that people wouldn't normally associate with nudity but wouldn't mind seeing a lot more of," she said.

This year's calendar features Greg Martin, Jordan Herrera, Frank Garcia, Geoff Rodriguez and Jay Salas of the Power Boys;

Clara Balaguer, Paolo Cabalfin; models Chunchiu Soler, Avi Siwa, Monique Guevarra; and actresses Jenny Miller, Aleck Bovick, and Victoria London.

Featured photographers are Raymund Isaac, Tom Epperson, Jovel Lorenzo, Claudine Sia, Neil Lucente, Ronnie Salvacion and Lilen Uy.

A special Zen Zest gift pack can be won by readers who text their votes on the sexiest body in the calendar. To vote, type Metro<answer><complete name> and send to 2366. Readers may also tell the Metro editor who they want to see in the next Body Calendar by typing Metro<space><survey><answer><complete name> and send to 2366. Lucky texters will receive gifts from Compaq.



Art show at Cebu Plaza

CATCH "Gasa," an exhibit of mixed media, sculptures and paintings selected and curated by the Pusod Inc., the association of Cebu artists, at the Abueva Art Lounge of the Cebu Plaza Hotel.

Participating artists are Jojo Sagayno, Josua Cabrera, Ritchie Quijano, Peter Ang, Dale Alquino, Christine Managuerra, Evan Bejec, Hannah Panares, Diosdado Montano, Javy Villacin, Estela Ocampo-Fernandez, Roy Lumagbas and Raymund Fernandez.

The show runs until tomorrow.

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MBA workshop

THE PHILIPPINE-American Educational Foundation (PAEF) will hold an MBA workshop on Jan. 20 at the Manila Peninsula Hotel from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. The workshop will take place before the MBA Fair, also on Jan. 20 at 6 p.m.

Twenty directors of admissions from US, Australian and Asian MBA programs will facilitate small groups of prospective students. Following the success of last year's event, the activity offers an inside perspective on how to improve an MBA application, allowing participants to gain insight on their own potential for highly competitive international schools of business. It is highly recommended for anyone planning to apply for an MBA program in 2003 or 2004.

Interested parties must make reservations through PAEF at 812-0945 or faxing at 812-0822. Only 50 people will be admitted.



LIFESTYLE

ACTOR-SINGER
Roeder plays
supporting role to
Ian Lomongo's Dr.
Kusaki.

PHOTO BY RANDY
HORMILLOSA

TANGHALANG PILIPINO'S NEW PLAY Bittersweet comedy on family planning

By Cora Llamas
Contributor

SINCE the aptly titled Tanghalang Pilipino (TP) play, "Kung Kailan Ka Pwede," is set in the rural outskirts in the 1920s, there's no mention of condoms, artificial insemination, or state-of-the-art, straight-from-the-lab anti-ovulation pills.

The scientific breakthrough in this case is the old-fashioned rhythm method. Yet, the shy wallflower of a Japanese doctor who discovers it, a real historical person named Ogino Kyusaki (played by Ian Lomongo), finds himself breaking conventional eggshells and drawing unwanted attention because of all the ruckus.

Along with Herman Knaus of Germany, Kyusaki is recognized for laying the foundation for the development of modern family planning by natural methods. Separately working at opposite ends of the globe, Knaus and Kyusaki discovered the formula that women take to heart after realizing their childbearing capabilities: before the next menstruation, conception is possible from 12 to 19 days, rare from 20 to 24 days, and impossible during the 11 days of that same period.

In the script written by Japanese women playwrights Iijima Sanae and Suzuki Yumi, translated into Filipino by Rody Vera, Kyusaki doesn't plan on pioneering a new medical ground. He just wants to help his problematic patients. Sakai (Angela Garcia Altomonte), a

BITTERSWEET/E4

Even the invention of the natural method of birth control was attended by serious social and ethical questions

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CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Robert Stack, Penelope Ann Miller, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Brandon Tarkoff
Happy Birthday: It will be a year of exhaustion, exhilaration and experience. As long as you think quickly, make your decisions based on your findings and respond to whatever you face with strength, courage, diplomacy, and success will follow. Your numbers are 12, 18, 22, 29, 31, 38



ARIES (March 21-April 19): Consider what the investment you come across today can do for you. Sign up for a course or attend a seminar that will bring you valuable knowledge and skills.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Just because you are feeling drawn to someone doesn't mean that you should follow through. This person may not be as he or she appears. Keep your thoughts to yourself.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Keep your money in a safe place. Your generous nature will get you into trouble. If you really want to help someone out, be a good listener.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20): This is not the day to sit back and let others do the work. The more you do to ensure you will get ahead, the greater your chances will become. Take advantage of all your options.



CANCER (June 21-July 22): If you are cool about what's going on around you today, good results can unfold. It's not as though someone is out to get you or make your life miserable.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Do something that you've always wanted to do. Travel, getting involved in something you believe in or just improving yourself will help your attitude.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): This is not the day to take a risk. As long as you stick to what you know best, you'll do just fine. Try to take it easy and refrain from doing something you shouldn't.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Someone may not feel the same way about you as you do about them. Your jealous nature will only cause more problems. Be cool and detached.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You can only rely on yourself today. Pursue something that excites you and you will be in a much better frame of mind.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): This is a new year and you want to start off on the right foot. If you feel good about yourself, you will do much better. Make today a new beginning.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Before you go any further, you may want to decide whether or not this is what you really want to do. Consider how your decisions will affect the people in your life.

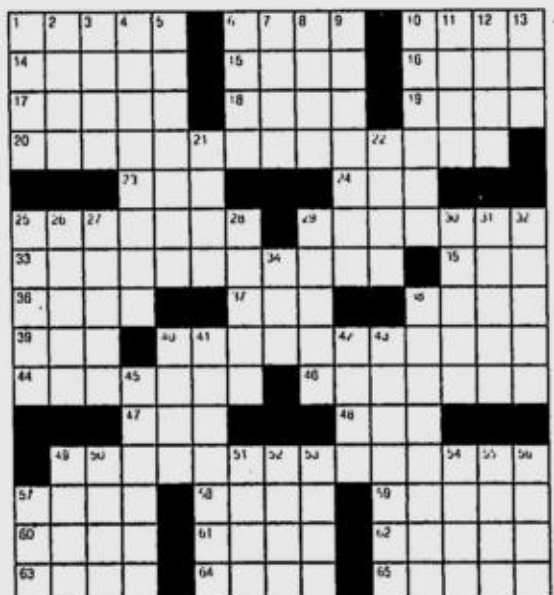


PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Make today the day you do something different. Your regular routine is not bringing you the satisfaction you desire. Act on your instincts.

Birthday Baby: You will be strong, determined and forthright in all that you do. You will be a leader, not a follower, and your strong opinions will be well-spoken and well-heard.

DAILY CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- Holy city of Islam
 - Was in the red
 - Matching
 - Standoffish
 - Tiny bit
 - Bator, Mongolia
 - French Open winner of 1989
 - Karenina or Pavlova
 - One Truman
 - Ray Charles hit
 - Aries animal
 - Big CA
 - Justice Scalia
 - Led astray
 - Al Pacino movie
 - Swiss river
 - Egyptian deity
 - Shoshone tribesman
 - Sp. maiden
 - From to Beersheba
 - Songwriters' locale
 - Mules, e.g.
 - Business moguls
 - Nest-egg initials
 - Stitch together
 - Springsteen's backup group
 - Burn a bit
 - Melt
 - The Adventures of March
 - After-bath powder
 - Sea eagle
 - Fairy-tale toll collector
 - Cosmo rival
 - Cooking pans
 - Comedienne Georgia



By Holden Baker
Greenfield, MA

1/13/03

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

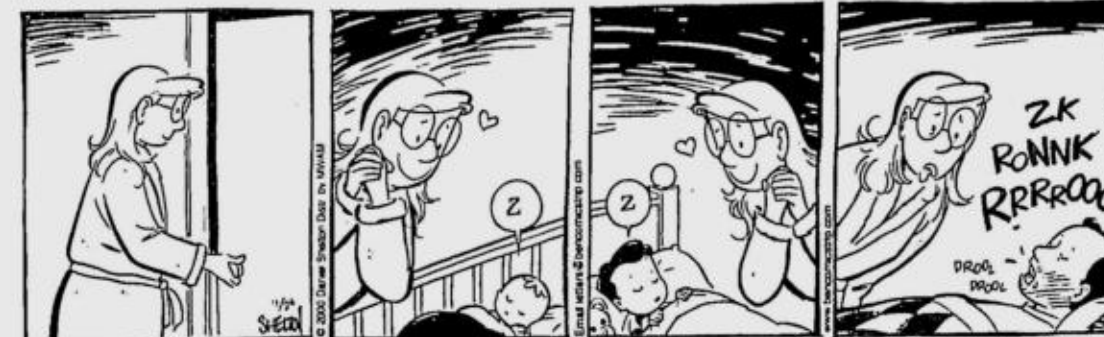


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- Fretting
- AMEX rival
- Film material
- Penetrated
- Mallard's cousin
- Emcee Monty
- "Comin' the Rye"
- Order
- Lamb's moms
- Highly excited
- Cleopatra's river
- Compaq competitor
- Holy Frenchwoman

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON



MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO



KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA



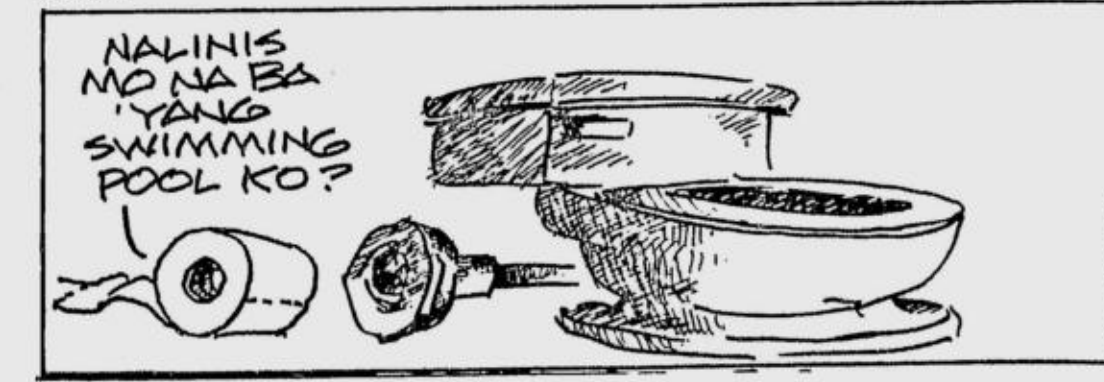
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO



TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING



A 'nobly planned' lady university president

By Rustica C. Carpio
Contributor

THE ENGLISH poet William Wordsworth wrote: "A perfect woman, nobly planned/ To warn, to comfort, and to command."

Dr. Lydia Balatbat-Echaz, chosen by the Far Eastern University (FEU) board of trustees as acting president to replace Dr. Edilberto C. de Jesus, Jr., who was named education secretary by President Macapagal-Arroyo, perhaps fits Wordsworth's description. She is young, energetic, personable, accessible and intelligent.

Dr. Echaz is not new to FEU, one of the biggest universities in the country with a population of some 25,000 students.

Her parents met on campus in 1939. Her mother, the late Isabelita R. Balatbat, was a graduate student then and teacher at the Girls' High School. Her father, CPA-lawyer Jose S. Balatbat, was then the president of the Student Council. They became two of the six FEU student delegates, including Dr. Sotero Laurel and former agrarian reform minister Conrado Estrella, to the Asian Student Goodwill Trip to Japan. During the 40-day sea-and-land voyage, love blossomed between Isabelita and Jose.

They married two years later. Isabelita then joined the faculty of the Institute of Education and the Institute of Arts and Sciences. Before she knew it, she had spent 49 years on campus, teaching.

Jose, now 84 years old, was also on the faculty of the Institute of Accounts, Business and Finance briefly right after the war, and again in the 1980s up to the '90s.

Echaz has a Bachelor of Arts degree, major in Economics and Mathematics, from St. Theresa's College, a Master of Business Administration from Ateneo de Manila University, and a Doctor of Business Administration from De La Salle University. She was last posted at De La Salle's Graduate School of Business where she was dean of the 1,600-student strong school for 16 of her 17 years of stay in the university.

Prior to that, she was associate director of the Graduate School of Business of Ateneo de Manila. From 1989-1994, she was executive director of the Jaime V. Ongpin Institute of Business and Government. She spent time also with the SM Group of Companies, as consultant for SM Prime Holdings, Inc. and the SM Foundation.

She was at various times executive director of the Association of Deans of Southeast Asian Graduate Schools of Management and a member of the board of governors of the Management Association of the Philippines.

"I like people who are industrious, honest and fair," she said in an interview. "Personally I like someone who is intelligent, easy to deal with. In life, I like the excitement of seeing new places and different cultures, trying different cuisine. I also like to travel to cold places since places that are warm make me feel like I'm still home."

Echaz is struck by advances in science and technology and comforted by beauty and culture. "My background and exposure all my life are business, management, economics and math, although I had (studied) liberal arts," she explained. "I am not an artist in any way, but being human, I love the fine things in life—the arts, music, dance, theater. I am a good member of the audience."

Thankful

Her proclivity to the arts has made her thankful that she's working in FEU. The FEU founder, Dr. Nicanor Reyes, was a culture leader. A biography of him is titled "Mr FEU: The Culture Hero that was Nicanor Reyes." The FEU Auditorium has played a leading role in Philippine performing arts. "I feel doubly privileged to be working here," Echaz said.

At St. Therese's, Echaz was at one time or another a dedicated member of the Catechetical Guild, the Arts Club, the Folk Dance Group and the Sewing Circle. On Saturday mornings, the honor student helped the Belgian nuns pack corn meal in brown bags to be distributed to poor families in the vicinity of the college in Quezon City, a block away from her home.

Her heart is closest to education, however. "When I was small, I'd always propose to my siblings to play school and I'd always be the teacher. My parents were both teachers and I suppose I idolized them. I wanted to be like them," she said.

Hers was an educational family. "We studied well," she recalled. "We talked and discussed national issues, and it was a forum of sorts every time. When we grew up, we were surprised that some families did not discuss issues of the day or even talk to each other."

Echaz said she drew her personal traits and qualities from both her parents. "I have a mix of my parents' qualities," she said. "My Mom was fun, kind, generous, sharp and cheerful. All of us children adored her, even if she never cooked or washed dishes. My Dad was serious, strict, disciplined, sharp and charming. My parents discussed books, government, politics, history, sports, movies on a regular basis. They were so comforting to have at home. They were fun and vibrant."

Echaz seems to take after her mother in raising successfully two daughters and a son, who are now in their twenties and thirties. The little time allowed her she uses for home chores. She loves space, big windows and doors, fresh air, plants and flowers. Sundays, before sunrise, she's off to a special market called Sidcor, which is open only on Sundays up to noon. There she gets fresh produce: crabs from Pampanga, plump fish from Bula-



Lydia Balatbat-Echaz takes over the helm of FEU

can, tender beef from Batangas, fresh fruits and vegetables from Tagaytay and Laguna, exotic cut flowers from Quezon, roses of all colors from Baguio, fruit trees and exotic flowering plants from Los Baños, kesong puti, gatas ng kalabaw, puto Biñan and puto Calasiao.

Her academic career is tailor-suited for somebody who enjoys being with people. "I am happiest being with people, that is why I think the academe, with its faculty, staff, and a continuing sea change of students, is the best environment for me," she said.

"Then I like the idea of excellence and perfection and enjoy the excitement of 'kaizen,' continuous improvement. I want to see things organized, systematic, efficient, effective.

The academe provides that environment. The FEU board of trustees, led by the chairperson, Dr. Lourdes Montinola, makes it happen on campus."

She urges the FEU community to "do our jobs well." "The faculty should be the best professors in teaching. And if possible, in research, too," she said. "I dream that every one on the faculty will have at least a master's degree. The faculty members should be role models in professionalism and competence, an inspiration to students." She urged FEU employees to render excellent services.

Echaz also called on the students to study well and take advantage of FEU's library resources and computer facilities for academic growth and self-improvement.

"I want us all to go for excellence because we have it in us to do so. FEU has such a rich academic, arts and cultural heritage and a glorious history," she said. "We have to regain FEU's rightful place as the best private, non-sectarian university in the country."

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The road back to an old romance

A Thousand Country Roads
By Robert James Waller
181 pages

By Leah Salterio

IF you haven't read "The Bridges of Madison County" or watched the film version that starred Clint Eastwood and Meryl Streep, then don't read "A Thousand Country Roads."

The latest novel by Robert James Waller is a poignant epilogue to "The Bridges of Madison County," detailing the missing years of the interlude following the passionate and unforgettable love affair between Robert Kincaid and Francesca Johnson.

Over the years since he published "Bridges," Waller received thousands of letters from readers from all over the world who wanted to know more about Robert and Francesca, after four days of being together in Madison County, Iowa.

Hence, Waller plucked himself out of his quiet existence on a remote, high-desert ranch, where he had returned to his studies of economics, mathematics and jazz guitar after writing "Bridges," to compose a follow-up.

"I felt no need to dig out the research notes, no push to write more," Waller says in his author's note. "Yet, somewhere at some time, for reasons not clear, I de-

cided to tell the rest of the story.

"In truth, there were two stories. But stories sometimes must wait their turn, lest they clutter other things having first call."

The emotional goodbye between Robert and Francesca was one of the most heartbreaking scenes I had watched in a Hollywood movie. Eastwood, standing by the door of Streep's kitchen, tells her: "In this universe of ambiguity, this kind of certainty comes only once and never again, no matter how many lifetimes you live."

REVIEW

The second novel is rather confusing because "Bridges" has already concluded even before it starts. If readers remember it right, the story starts with the death of Francesca. Her two children—Michael and Carolyn—learn about her brief love affair while browsing through her journals. The entire story is told through a flashback.

Bestseller

"A Thousand Country Roads" comes a decade after "Bridges," which sold over 12 million copies, half of it in hardcover, making it the best-selling hardcover of all time.

Waller says "Bridges" was a book originally written only as a gift for family and friends. He had no intention of ever getting it published. But to date, "Bridges" has been amazingly translated in over 35 languages.

Waller comes up with a sequel to the 'Bridges of Madison County' to satisfy readers who can't get enough of the ill-fated middle-aged affair between Robert Kincaid and Francesca Johnson

Waller is not the best romance novelist and it was not the quality of his writing that made "Bridges" a bestseller, but the three-hankie weepie affair of Robert and Francesca, who have become icons of ill-fated romance.

"A Thousand Country Roads" focuses on Kincaid in his twilight years. Still driving his aging pickup truck Harry and moving around with his golden retriever Highway, Robert goes on a nostalgic journey to Iowa.

Once there, he heads for Rose-

man Bridge, where he and Francesca had first met, to see if his old feelings are still as strong.

"One great love in a single lifetime was enough for anyone," writes Waller.

Ironically, however, Robert doesn't set out to look for Francesca after 16 years of being away from her. He simply wants to stand in Francesca's space and reaffirm the old memories.

In one chapter, it is hinted that at the same time that Robert drives his pickup truck to Roseman Bridge, Francesca is also there looking up the hill into the snow, a hundred yards away from him. And she has the distinct feeling that somebody is out there hidden by the trees. In fact, when she enters the bridge, she sees wet and muddy footprints on the planks.

Letdown

As a reader, I badly wanted the lovers to meet again even only briefly. But it was rather a letdown that they didn't even get to see each other again after 16 years. I guess that was already told in "Bridges."

During her visit to Roseman Bridge, what Francesca finds is a metal dog tag, which apparently belongs to Highway. The tag has an inscription for a rabies vaccination in 1981 in a veterinary clinic in Bellingham, Washington. She traces it to Robert, but finds out that he had switched to an-

other clinic in the Seattle area. She is told that Robert has a golden retriever.

In the last chapter of the book, Francesca prepares to leave for Seattle to begin her search for Robert, when she receives a UPS delivery box from a Seattle lawyer who represents him.

Flash forward to "Bridges," when Francesca is seen inspecting the contents of the box, with Robert's cameras, silver bracelet and a letter he wrote to her in 1978.

I cried buckets while reading "Bridges," but the bittersweet ending just didn't suit me. I'm forever a hopeless romantic who believes that true love can indeed happen. And in this lifetime, you can be together with your great love one day.

As for Robert and Francesca, even if they are haunted by their four-day love affair, they choose to remain wrapped up in memories after destiny pulled the rug from under their feet. Sad.

an epilogue to
The Bridges
of Madison County



A
THOUSAND
COUNTRY
ROADS

Robert James Waller

Bittersweet comedy...

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mother struggling with seven children in her brood, doesn't want to give birth any more. On the other hand, another patient, Hana (Angeli Bayani and Mayen Estanero alternate), will do anything to have a baby.

"Walang essence ang pagiging babae nila if the women can't get pregnant," director Herbie Go says to explain the cultural mores that Kyusaki and his patients have to contend with.

Mysticism and superstition

Conception, pregnancy and delivery of a newborn baby are shrouded in reverent mysticism and superstition. "The women performed many rituals," says Go. "Some of them refused to drink water before having sex. Or they placed the pillows in a certain position."

Tess Jamias, who plays Kyusaki's wife Tome, believes that the play will touch a sensitive chord today. "There are still some Filipinos who think that way: that you're not a whole woman if you don't give birth. Actually, it all points to women's rights because [the play tackles] when women can give birth and when women cannot."

Yet, to help these women, Kyusaki finds out to his chagrin that he has to break many cherished taboos. While Tome readily agrees to a traditionally arranged marriage with him, she is horrified at his request that they clinically and dispassionately calendar their sex acts. It doesn't help that his own nurse Yoriko (Marjorie Ann Lorico and Athena Masilungan alternate) scorns his attempts to study the menstrual cycle and peek at women's ovaries.

Jamias explains the weird conjugal set-up. "He needs a wife to plot her menstrual cycle. Wala namang career ang mga women noon. My character agrees to the arranged marriage, not knowing that he was going to use her. On the other hand, he is a very kind man. His pagka-torpe is endearing. He was around 37 when he got married."

Ian explains his character. "Kyusaki is very serious about his work. His main preoccupation is to solve the mystery of women's ovulation. Everything gets waylaid because of this single-mindedness of purpose. Minsan, nakakalimutan niya, nakakasagasa na siya."

The whole conundrum of planning for the next lovemaking is complicated by other issues that husband, wife and their little provincial community grapple with. As Go puts it, "Is he doing it for science or for his ambition? Does he sacrifice the health of his patients for the sake of his thesis? To help women, he says he has to observe their ovaries and look at their uterus—but what about the patient's rights?"

History does record that Kyusaki got his medical breakthrough. But does his wife love him or leave him? Does his scathing nurse's anger turn into respect? And what about his male colleagues? Do they applaud him or bash him? And was it all worth it in the long run? TP invites the audience to find out.

Tanghalang Pilipino's "Kung Kailan Ka Pwede" runs on Jan. 17-Feb. 2 at the Tanghalang Huseng Batute, CCP Complex. Call 832-3661.

Great poetry for the bedside table

Blood Sacrifice

By Maria Luisa Aguilar-Cariño

UP Press and Likhaan: The UP Institute of Creative Writing, 1997
149 pages

By Milan Jose
Contributor

IF you're interested in poetry beyond the usual exclamations of greeting-card love and affection, you might want to read Maria Luisa Aguilar-Cariño's "Blood Sacrifice."

Aguilar-Cariño, who now goes by the name Aguilar-Igloria, has had two successful collections, "Cartography" and "Encanto."

REVIEW

"Cartography," in its simple, stark lyricism, focuses on Aguilar-Cariño's roots, while "Encanto" tackles a national vision by working with the news of our daily lives, such as the plight of overseas contract workers and the controversies of local politics. In "Encanto's" maturity and complexity, to my mind anyway, she offered us some of her best work and left us breathless.

"Blood Sacrifice" seems to continue from where "Encanto" left off. Once more, Aguilar-Cariño explores local politics, expatriate life and, sometimes, our mundane daily existence. The difference between the two books, though, lies in the readers she appears to be writing for. Capitalizing on the more indigenous aspects of Pinoy culture and history, she deploys a dash of ethnic here, a dash of homesickness and exile there, for what could only be a non-Pinoy audience hungry for the "exotic."

In some of these poems, you may get the sneaky suspicion that you're in a window display for casual consumers. "Pregnant Stone Virgin" has, for its epigraph, the following: "It was reported that a statue of the Virgin Mary in a house on V. Luna was miracu-



ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

lously pregnant"—and the poem goes on to how the news travels via gossip and local television, how people arrived to come in contact with the "miracle": "leaving their slippers by the door, / bringing from the open market the smell of fish that have struggled / all day in woven baskets and the singular / aura of mushrooms conceived in lightning."

Of course, a pregnant religious icon and the fishy, be-slipped, befuddled groupies it attracts will draw the attention of those unaccustomed to such "supernatural phenomenon." Many of us who breathe the superstitious, polluted air of Metro Manila, however, view news about icons that laugh, cry, bleed or otherwise show signs of human life as pretty much commonplace.

Master of craft

But when she isn't busy offering Philippine peculiarities to foreigners, Aguilar-Cariño is master of the poetic craft, and that makes her an intense read. Whether writing narrative or lyric poetry, she has the ability to capture the mystery and essence of an experience, and distill these with an almost minimalist disdain for words.

In "Suminagashi," a poem of three stanzas, you will find a density in her compressed expression: "The sea finds its way into the cove / waves splinter misery / there is no other, world but here."

The problem for many would-be readers of poetry, or even those who are already avidly interested, is that much of free verse often seems incomprehensible. Then, again, just as writing poetry doesn't necessarily have to be about communication, appreciating poetry doesn't necessarily rest on understanding what it's about.

Sometimes, it's enough that the constellation of words creates sounds that resonate in the aural imagination, and that this resonance speaks to our memories. Sometimes, it's enough that the poetry sings. So she gives us "Consequence": "Hour of frost, hour meant originally / for the composition of light / Night that resolves in the opaque / wallpaper of sky, phosphorescence / in an iron drum. Here is where to walk / a path to water in the cold well where stars / sleep, ringed with stones."

And in "What the Stones Sang": "Here you dig, centuries later, ruin / after ruin spilling out of the stones. / You shake them free from their brown habits. / Release the roots clustered like a faded psalm / of sleeping vowels. Little circles, mouths / that open as Os, trust your speckled throats."

At the figurative and literal end of the day, Maria Luisa Aguilar-Cariño is great for the bedside table because if she has one thing, it's a poetic voice that makes music that's worth listening to.

'Genius' Pinoy cookbook at Popular

"INDAY Genius," written by Obi Mapua, Waco Mapua, Kristin Lim and Albert Roa, is a cookbook in easy-to-understand Filipino.

The thick (208 pages) and large-format (8x10) book features over 100 popular recipes, in large text. It is well-illustrated.

"Inday Genius" is targeted for the household, as well as beginning enthusiasts who want to learn how to cook and enjoy preparing tasty, wholesome meals. It can also be a training manual for teaching others how to cook, prepare meals, and develop a sense for food handling and kitchen organization.

There is a long section on kitchen tips and techniques called "Sikreto," which guides even the most inexperienced through the mysteries of making a marvelous meal. Many hard-to-find "kitchen secrets" that you can only see in professional cookbooks are featured.

"Inday Genius" is distributed by Popular Book Store, located at 305 Tomas Morato, just off Timog, with tel. 372-2162.

New My Special Valentine pocketbook titles

START the New Year with 12 romance novels from My Special Valentine (MSV) pocketbooks. Written by a new breed of writers, each novel of the series is romance writing at its best.

The new MSV titles include: "Ma-

hal Kong Bastardo," "Pretend You Love Me," "Between a Kiss and a Lie," "Until I Found You," "Light of my Heart," "Minsan Pa Sana'y Mayakap Ka," "Maria Lorena," "Love Will Remain," "Charade," "Muli Kitang Mamahalin," "Make it Last Forever"

and "Ikaw ang Pangarap."

Bookware Publishing Corp. has announced that the year-long "Nokia 8310 Raffle Promo" for MSV readers is up to February only. Call 631-8893/94 or fax 631-7811.

Israel string ensemble in one-night show

THE TEL AVIV Trio, a renowned string ensemble, is doing a by-invitation-only show at the Captain's Bar of Mandarin Oriental tomorrow evening.

The show is part of the group's series of performances in the Philippines arranged by the Embassy of Is-

rael, with Air Philippines, Mandarin Oriental Manila, Arts Council of Cebu and the Cultural Affairs Committee of Dumaguete City.

The Jan. 10-15 schedule of the Tel Aviv Trio includes a series of recitals and master classes including a show at the City Sports Club

in Cebu City and the Luce Auditorium of Siliman University in Dumaguete City.

Composed of young artists mentored by the great violinist, Isaac Stern, the Tel Aviv Trio was founded under the auspices of the Jerusalem Music Center in 1998.

Alternative lifestyle mag calls for contributions

MOIST, the alternative lifestyle magazine, is calling for contributions to any of its sections.

The literary section, Symbols & Metaphors, is edited by Cirilo R. Bautista, Palanca Hall of Famer and Centennial Literary Award winner.

The social advocacy section, Pananagutan, is edited by Bombit

Largoza, a professor of economics.

Gender and relationships are tackled in the G-Spot section, edited by Rhandee Garlitos, a multi-awarded poet and children's story writer.

Project: Soul Trade, the consumer section, is edited by Karl de Mesa.

The Egghead section covers

film, entertainment and the media. It is edited by comic book artist, movie reviewer and lifestyle writer Oliver Pulumbart.

Manuscripts may be sent to moistmagazine@mailcity.com as attached word processing files preferably in .rtf or .txt format.

Call (0917) 7342163.